



THE
LIFE of LIVES

THE STORY OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

LOUISE MORGAN SILL.



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THE LIFE OF LIVES

LOUISE MORGAN SILL

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*The Story of Our Lord Jesus Christ
For Young People*

BY
LOUISE MORGAN SILL



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

As the object of this book is an effort to make more real and vivid to general readers the character of Our Lord and the nature of His earthly surroundings, to bring Him nearer to the understanding, I have taken all Biblical quotations from Dr. James Moffatt's "New Translation of the New Testament" rather than from the beautiful and familiar King James Version of the Bible.

Dr. Moffatt's new translation is the work of a profound scholar who has availed himself of the most recent discoveries, and has reclothed the Gospels in plain, vigorous, accurate language which can be understood at a glance by the most casual reader, and which produces a quite fresh impression.

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“So he called a child, set it among them and said, ‘I tell you truly, unless you turn and become like children, you will never get into the realm of heaven at all.’”

MATT. XVIII, 2-3.

“It is written, . . . The Lord knows the reasoning of the wise is futile.”

ST. PAUL—I COR. III, 20.

THE LIFE OF LIVES

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

It was a bleak winter night. For though no snow fell in that warm country of Judæa, yet in the winter season the air was cold and biting and chilled the bodies of the poor, who shivered as they made their way faster through the dark and narrow streets of the little village of Bethlehem.

The evening was drawing on, and the sun was nearly set, as a man and a Woman came wearily along the Jerusalem road which led to the entrance of the village. He was a tall, well-formed man, already arrived at middle age, with a kind and strong yet gentle face. He walked beside the Woman, who rode upon a mule, her slender body bent slightly forward as though she were beginning to yield to the fatigue of a long journey. Eighty miles they had come, indeed, along the toilsome road from their home village of Nazareth in the pleasant country of Galilee.

The Woman was much younger than the man, and her fair beauty had in it something ethereal

and angelical. There was a kind of moonlike radiance in her face. Her eyes were a deep blue, and their white lids drooped slightly with patient weariness, as the petals of a flower must close when the day is done. Her brow was open and candid like a child's, and the softly arched line where it met her glowing hair suggested, to the mind of one who looked upon her, a bright halo such as those that are painted above the heads of pictured saints.

The hill country through which they were passing was dreary and gray in its winter aspect. Large rocks lay in heaps here and there, with straggling groups of gray-green olive trees, of which many were old and had thick gnarled and twisted trunks. From time to time they passed a flock of drowsy sheep, tended by shepherds carrying long staffs, and wearing broad, turban-like caps and wide-sleeved cloaks which they drew closer around them against the chill of the fast-coming night.

In summer the grass and wild flowers and balmy air made these hills more agreeable, but now it was but a bare and somber country through which the man and Woman traveled, and they were glad that the village of Bethlehem, whither they were bound, now lay before them, a group of low, one-storied, brownish-yellow houses, rising on a dark sloping ridge.

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They had come to enroll their names in the great census ordered by the Syrian proconsul, Quirinius, for his master the Roman emperor, Cæsar Augustus, and to be taxed, and they came to Bethlehem because it was the home of their illustrious ancestor, David, once a shepherd, then king of Israel, he who was poet as well as king and wrote the immortal Psalms. The man was Joseph, who was a carpenter at Nazareth, and the Woman was his young wife, Mary. Their lives were poor and obscure, and their only riches were faith, virtue, purity of heart. But as they passed humbly along the road there was something calm and fair and holy which seemed to accompany them.

The sun had been long set when they entered Bethlehem, and the dark streets and houses gave them but a poor welcome. As best they could, they made their way to the village inn, to which they were guided by the lamp which hung from the middle of a rope stretched across the entrance. Down the shadowy narrow street it shone before them like a small yellow star, and led them kindly to shelter. Poor as the inn was, it was at least a resting place, and the young Mary, drooping lower over the dumb beast who carried so willingly his precious burden, rejoiced to draw near.

The inn was a small, low building of rough

stone, built in several arches around a courtyard. Its only rooms for travelers were the spaces contained in the arches, which had no doors and therefore no privacy, opening as they did upon the courtyard. In this court were gathered all the animals belonging to the guests of the inn, upon which they had themselves arrived from various parts, or had brought laden with goods for traffic. There were mules, horses and camels, with their Oriental harness and trappings; and a strange odor rose from this company of beasts. Because of the census the number of strangers being unusually large, some of their animals were crowded into a natural limestone cave, which formed part of the inn, and was not unusual as a feature of architecture in this rocky country.

As Joseph entered the courtyard with the retiring timidity of a stranger, leading by the bridle the mule upon which Mary was seated, he was met by the discouraging words that the inn was full, that every arch was occupied, and there was no shelter for him and his wife—unless, indeed, they would sleep in the cave where the horses, mules and camels were already munching their evening food. It was the only possible shelter left for them. Well, it would at least shut out the cold, penetrating night air, and for his young wife Joseph knew that some place to

recline and rest was immediately necessary. So they entered the cave with thankful hearts.

It was dark within, but they were given a lantern, whose golden rays made fantastic shadows of the mules and camels in the deep brown corners. The placid animals allowed Joseph to open a space for Mary in one of these corners, and here they spread their small carpet, and ate their simple meal of bread and cheese and fruit. No feast was ever more glorious than that in the shadow-veiled corner of the Bethlehem cave. For with it there was perfect love and perfect grace, and over it all the glory of what Mary and Joseph kept in their hearts—the marvelous Secret that was to bring such changes into the world.

Before the meal Joseph had taken the harness and burdens from his mule, and now he placed hay for it in a manger, bringing it water to drink from a near-by spring; and all being ready, they prepared for such sleep as their strange circumstances might afford them. The inn became quiet as the night lengthened, and the stars grew brighter and shone with a deeper radiance. The tired travelers slept, the horses and mules and camels slumbered too, and all was silent and all was full of brooding mystery.

CHAPTER II

THE SHEPHERDS ARE TOLD OF THE BIRTH

Now about a mile from Bethlehem there was a plain where certain faithful shepherds were watching their flocks during the night, lest some of the foolish sheep should stray away and be lost, or stolen by robbers or killed by the wolves. The shepherds were weary from their long day-watch, and were half asleep, lying on the cold ground wrapped in their thick woolen cloaks. Some say there were four shepherds, and that their names were Acheel, Misael, Cyriacus and Stephanus. They were poor men, without education or power, humbly guarding their flocks as a means of earning a scanty livelihood.

Acheel, then let us call him, kept stricter watch than the rest, it being his turn thus to relieve his comrades while they slept. He sat on one of the large rocks which lay here and there on the meager pasture, and his thoughts in the majestic silence of the night rested in a vague wonder about Jehovah, the Creator and Father of all men and all things, Who had promised to send a Messiah—a Christ, a Savior—to the wicked and hunger-

ing people, and the Messiah never came. When would He come—when would He come and redeem God's promise? He knew that his people, and other nations farther East, expected that this promise would soon be fulfilled, and that He would send to Judæa a Savior who would be a mighty monarch, full of power and glory, and who in pomp and magnificence would put down the oppressors of the Jewish people, and rule the whole world. And the Prophets had said that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, the City of David.

Thinking thus Acheel, too, fell drowsy. He might have slept, and in so doing he might have lost one of his sheep, but this was not to be. For at that moment the poor man sat suddenly upright, and looked all around him with a startled air. What was that? It seemed like a distant strain of music! But that was impossible. Here on the silent plain at night there could be no music. But while he told himself it could not be—that he dreamed there in the silence and loneliness of the night—the music came nearer. The night also grew brighter. The darkness seemed to melt away and give place to light. What light? Whence came it? It was still far from the time of dawn—and this was not the gray-blue light of dawn. It was rather a mellow glow, as if it were reflected from a sea of

molten gold. No sun, no moon ever shone like that. It was no mere shining at all—it was a slow, golden glow. It grew stronger, and Acheel put his hand before his eyes, and with a sudden feeling of terror such as he had never known in his life, he cried aloud to his comrades. They were already on their feet, dazed and frightened, and they, too, covered their eyes from the strange powerful light that now bathed them all and the plain immediately around them in its overwhelming radiance. The sheep, motionless, seemed turned to soft gold. Every blade of grass was a slim golden knife.

As they stood, struck still as statues in their sudden awe, an angel, white amid the yellow glow, stood before them and spoke in a voice of grave music. And the angel said,

“Have no fear. This is good news I am bringing you, news of a great joy that is meant for all the people. Today you have a Savior born in the town of David, the Lord Messiah. And here is a proof for you: you will find a baby wrapped up and lying in a stall for cattle.”¹

As the angel's voice ceased, suddenly he was surrounded by many rows of other angels, beings of celestial happiness, gleaming white as snow in the golden light. And all of them raised their voices in joyous praise of God, singing,

¹ Luke 11, 10-12.

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“Glory to God in high heaven, and peace on earth for men whom he favors.”

The music rolled in waves of richest harmony; it seemed to fill and surround the whole earth with a pure flood of melody; it seemed to draw the souls of the shepherds from their bodies, and to raise and float them in such an ecstasy of joy as they had never conceived. They seemed to become one with the angels, and to be drowned in the light and the sound which caused their frail senses to reel and almost leave them. Their joy was nigh to become suffering, for their human bodies were not able to contain it. But as they strove thus, the music grew less, the golden glow diminished—music and light lessened slowly, faded, and gradually ceased. Then the shepherds, overcome by their terror and joy, fell down with their faces to the earth.

For some time they lay thus without moving. Then Acheel ventured to raise his head timidly, and peer around into the quiet night. All was silent and exactly as it was before the heavenly visitation. The scene was fair and full of peace. The sheep, huddled together for warmth, seemed to sleep; there was not a breath of wind, and the stars gleamed with an unearthly light.

The three other shepherds raised their heads also, half in fright and half in awe-struck curiosity, and all looked questioningly at one another,

as if they were fain to speak but feared to break the enchanted silence. In their ears still echoed the strains of that heaven-born music, and they were not yet recovered from the spell of it. At length Acheel arose and said,

“Let us be off to Bethlehem to see this thing that the Lord has told us of.”²

So, forgetting their flocks and everything but the startling revelation of the angel, with hearts beating fast with hope and wonder, they hastily made their way along the cold starlit road to Bethlehem.

As the angel had said they would find the Babe lying in a stall for cattle, they directed their steps to the inn where such a stall would surely be found. The lantern which hung in the middle of the rope across the entrance of the inn guided them, and they hastened within, looking guardedly about them as they passed through the courtyard where the animals were tethered. But they saw no baby there, and they went farther, and finally into the brown shadowy cave, which was made less obscure than the dark courtyard by the rays of light which shone from one of its corners. Pushing gently aside the horses and mules and camels, which were all awake but quiet as if they were listening, the shepherds came to the place

² Luke 11, 15.

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of light. And when they saw Mary and Joseph, silent but with radiant faces, and in the rude manger between them a Babe, placid and aware, who seemed to be full of a strong-shining light which illuminated the faces of those who looked upon Him, they knelt down and prayed and were full of wonder and thankfulness.

The Baby looked calmly at them, and as He looked the hearts of the poor men leapt in their bosoms, and they went out and began to proclaim the Birth of the long expected Messiah and Savior to the sleeping village, so that people were awakened and amazed at what they heard. When the shepherds told of the angel's visit while they guarded their flocks, and of his wonderful words, and of the heavenly choirs that sang in the night, and the light that glorified the dark plain, they marveled more and more, and spoke to one another in awe. After the shepherds had thus made the whole village acquainted with these signs and wonders, they returned to the Babe in the manger to worship Him, and passed the remainder of the night in praising God and talking over the glorious things they had seen.

When by the bleak dawn light they returned to their flocks, not one sheep had strayed away, but they, like the mules, the horses and camels in the holy cave, were awake and seemed to be watching and listening.

CHAPTER III

WHY THE MESSIAH WAS EXPECTED

We must now try to understand why the Jewish people, like these shepherds, longed so earnestly for a Savior, a Messiah. They were proud, headstrong, bent upon having their own way, and though they often met with the most dreadful misfortunes, they could not learn submission to the will of God and full obedience to Him. They had received God's sacred commandments—the Ten Commandments—from the hands of their great prophet Moses, and they were constantly breaking them in one way or another. Yet we should remember that when all the nations were worshiping idols and false gods, the Jews believed in one God only, Jehovah; and though there were some among them who turned aside from the right way and set up idols to worship and pray to, yet as a race they upheld, and passed on to us, the faith in the one true God. That is indeed a great debt we owe to them. We must also remember, in thinking of them harshly, as we may when we read in this story of the cruel and blasphemous acts some of them committed, and of

their final unspeakable deed of sin—we must remember that they had not known Jesus as we know Him, and had not inherited the inestimable advantage of centuries of faith in Him and love for Him, as we have done.

The country of the Jews was called Palestine, and its chief city Jerusalem. It was divided into provinces—Judæa, Samaria, Galilee and the territory East of the Jordan—and the whole had been conquered by the then strongest nation of the world, the Romans, that wonderful people whose empire was so vast that to this day we find their ruins in many countries—Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany, and North Africa. To the Jews it was a heart-rending misfortune to be a conquered people, to be subject to the haughty Roman empire. For the Jews, too, were equally haughty, stiffly set in their own ways, and ardently devoted to their religion and its innumerable and frequently trifling and finical customs. It was a religion of the body rather than the spirit; and if you will keep this in mind, you will understand our narrative better.

The Jews then were unhappy because they were full of sin, and because they were under the rule of a great and mighty but still idolatrous and cruel nation, Rome. It is not unnatural that they longed for a deliverer—some conquering king who would set them free, and make

them rich and powerful, putting their enemies forever under their feet. Their hearts were not full of love and mercy, but of revenge and cruelty. Their prophets had said for hundreds of years past that a Savior would come to them, but they saw him in their imaginations only as a conquering warrior or king. And it was not only the Jews who looked for this Messiah.¹ Other nations, having, like them, a consciousness of sin and the need of help from some power higher than themselves, shared this feeling. Throughout most of the world, historians tell us, there was at that time the strange and but half-conscious expectation of a Deliverer, even among the Romans and Greeks who believed in a great number of gods, whose mythology has added interest to art and literature for many ages. But these were only imaginary gods whose images they worshiped, and who were very much like mere men and women and not good men and women either, and their influence over men's minds had begun to wane.

To illustrate this, there is an interesting legend of the death of Pan, the Greek god of pastures, flocks and forests, who died, we are told by Plutarch, in the days of the wicked Roman em-

¹The word Messiah is Hebrew, the Jewish language, and means One who is Anointed and set apart for His high office of Prophet, Priest or King. The word Christ is Greek, and has the same meaning as Messiah.

peror Tiberius. Now Tiberius reigned over the Roman empire, and therefore over Palestine, during most of the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is supposed that Pan died just as Jesus was born: which is to say that these heathen myths and false gods did actually vanish before the coming of the Truth.

This legend of Pan's death tells how a ship, passing the island of Corfu—which lies near Greece in the Ionian Sea—was suddenly becalmed. The helmsman, who was an Egyptian named Thamnus, heard his name called in the quiet air. Startled, he tried to discover whence the voice came. It seemed to float out from the islands of the Echinades, and it told him that when he should pass a place known as Palodes, he should tell the people that the great god Pan was dead. Thamnus did so, and immediately all the air seemed full of mysterious voices, sighing and lamenting, so that everyone was amazed at the sounds.

The only truth to be found in this legend is that the false gods of the heathen myths were really dying and disappearing from the world, where their worship had encouraged a great deal of wickedness, and were giving place to the wonderful new era of Christianity. But this era was now only in its beginning, and much had to happen—much sacrifice and suffering—before it

could help and redeem the world. So at this time, when Pan's death was proclaimed, there was something, as we say, in the very air—many mysterious voices speaking to men's souls and telling them not of death but of Life—of the coming of One who would bear them up and save them. And the Jews believed this more than any other nation, because the message had been sent directly to them through the voices of their great prophets—Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Micah and the others. Some men, confused perhaps by the ardent wishes of the people and the tense expectation of the times, believed themselves to be the Messiah Himself, and seriously made this announcement. But they proved to be merely men, and are interesting to us only as showing the excited condition of people's minds at that time. All these signs pointed straight to the great event that was actually coming—had come, indeed, as we have already learned, in the strangely poor and humble birth of our Lord Jesus Christ at Bethlehem.

CHAPTER IV

THE WISE MEN AND HEROD

It was not surprising therefore that one day, soon after the birth of the Holy Babe, there should appear in the great city of Jerusalem three strangers who had traveled hither from the East, and who said that they had come to worship the new-born King of the Jews, whose birth had been announced to them by a brilliant star in the eastern heavens which had guided and was still guiding their search. These impressive strangers came riding on stately and richly caparisoned camels, and were themselves finely clothed, and wore rings of sard or cornelian or jasper. Some have said they were kings, but it is believed that they were Wise Men, learned in astrology, the science of understanding the present and foretelling the future by a study of the stars, which was much practiced in those days.

When they reached Jerusalem the Wise Men told various people about their journey: how they had seen the luminous star in the East, and knew that it announced the birth of a great King of the Jews, a Messiah; how they had put every-

thing aside to follow it, in order that they might go and pay their homage to the new King, and how they had journeyed for long, weary days, the beautiful star ever going before and leading the way. As one person told another this wonderful piece of news, it soon reached the king in his palace.

This king was the wicked Herod the Great, a man of remarkable character, but without heart and without love for God. He was an Idumæan who reigned over the Jews' country under the authority of the Roman emperor. The Jews of Judæa, over whom he ruled, hated him as a heathen, a cruel man, and an alien who did not understand them or their religion of the one true God, and who had no sympathy with the numerous rites, ceremonies and customs of all sorts which were so dear to them.

Herod, already an aged man, knew that the people neither respected nor loved him, and being in constant fear of insurrection or rebellion among them, and knowing that his master, the Roman emperor, would be displeased if the peace were broken and trouble should come in Judæa, he sat very uneasily on his throne in Jerusalem. He was called "the Great" because he had accomplished many public works during his long reign. He had rid the province of Galilee of robbers,

which was a task of great difficulty, as these robbers lived in the many rocky caves of the country, and were not easily discovered. He had built an aqueduct, gymnasiums, theaters, baths, colonnades, and many heathen temples, some of them being temples to the Roman emperor. He gave prizes for the public games, and a permanent endowment to the Olympian games which preserved them for all time. Also, he made Jerusalem one of the strongest fortified cities in Asia. But the Jews did not, could not feel any gratitude for these material benefits because Herod was cruel to them spiritually, would not respect their religion or their peculiar morals, and punished them with death—by decapitation and even burning alive—on many occasions when they were only defending their religion from his heathen insults. But, strangely enough, by his own wicked followers, called Herodians, he himself was considered to be a “Messiah,” and in that supposed capacity he had rebuilt the Jews’ most holy and sacred of churches known as the Temple of Jerusalem. This work he performed in a magnificent manner. In his fierce ambition and self-glorification, he declared that the present Temple was sixty cubits lower than Solomon’s had been (of which wonderful ancient building we read in the Old Testament), and he desired

to rebuild it to a height equal to that of Solomon's, or even higher.¹

Colossal blocks of stone were brought for this rebuilding, twenty feet long and four feet high—some accounts say they were forty cubits long and ten cubits high—and white marble was brought with the greatest difficulty from distant places, from Arabia and the Grecian islands. Year after year the work went on, performed by ten thousand workmen and a thousand wagoners. But the Jews were so fearful lest there should be some violation, some disrespect of their holy Temple, that Herod was obliged to have the inner sanctuary—the altar and its surroundings, and the forecourt of the priests—built only by the priests themselves. A thousand of them were trained in the trades of carpenters and masons for this purpose. When after many years the great work was completed, fourteen years before the birth of Christ, three hundred oxen were sacrificed at the consecration, which enables us to imagine the enormous size of its courts.

Though even the Jews were obliged to acknowledge the beauty and grandeur of the rebuilt Temple, Herod outraged their feelings by placing a Roman eagle above the principal gate! To the Jews this was an insult to their one true

¹ A cubit is as long as the forearm from the elbow to the end of the middle finger, usually equalling one foot and a half.

God, and it led to open conflicts between king and people, and to tragical events such as the burning alive of two teachers, and the beheading of forty other men. Thus it was that all that Herod did exasperated, irritated or infuriated the Jews. His life, in fact, was full of jealous fear and hatred, within his own family, and without among the people. Consequently, when he heard that three Wise Men from the East had come to Jerusalem on their way to find a new-born King of the Jews, having been led by a star, he was filled with new alarm. He called together all the Chief Priests and Scribes² and asked them where, according to the prophets, should Christ, the Messiah, be born. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judæa."

Then Herod dismissed them, greatly troubled because he feared the rivalry of a new King of the Jews, and privately sent for the Wise Men that they might come before him in his palace and tell him more of this curious story. So the three Wise Men went solemnly before the king, and gave again an account of their star-led journey. We can imagine them there, clad in their long robes embroidered with strange devices, wearing wide turbans, giving this information to the crafty king. Herod pretended to be full of sym-

² The Scribes were the special students, writers and teachers of the law, the lawyers.

pathetic interest and respect for this new-born "King." He asked them many questions, when and how the star appeared, and everything concerning their travels. Then he commanded them to continue their journey to Bethlehem, and to "search diligently" for the young Child, and to return afterwards and tell him all that they had learned concerning Him, where and what He was, that he, too, might then go and worship Him.

So they left the powerful king in his luxurious palace, with his innumerable lackeys and flatterers, and calmly pursued their way in search of the Holy Child, carrying with them always, bound upon their camels, the gifts of costly gold, frankincense and myrrh which they had brought all this long distance to offer, lovingly and humbly, to Him, the true King. Then they searched the heavens and beheld again their star in the East, and they followed it.

After they had traveled a while the night drew on, and the star grew more and more bright. It went before them until it reached the village of Bethlehem, and there it hung in the dark rich sky like a beautiful sparkling lamp, and moved no more. Then the Wise Men knew that the Babe indeed lay at Bethlehem, and they rejoiced.

What a contrast between the magnificence of Herod's palace, with its stately halls, colonnades,

baths, its furniture of gold and silver, which they had just left, and the poor little inn where they now found the new-born King! Hither came the Wise Men in great joy, and finding the Babe they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then they took the packs from their camels and opened them, and gave the Child the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and they were filled with a great happiness.

That night the Wise Men had a dream. In this dream they were warned that they must not go back to King Herod, nor tell him where they had found the Child. So they returned to their own homes by another road, full of gladness at the success of their long journey.

CHAPTER V

THE PRESENTATION AND FLIGHT

We must now return to the humble inn at Bethlehem, and understand what had been passing there. But to do that we must go back still further to the holy day when Mary was told that a Divine Son would be born to her.

The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke tell us that before Mary was married to Joseph an angel came and said that, while still a virgin, she would bear a Child who should be the Son of God; that He should be called Jesus, a name meaning Salvation; that He should save His people from their sins, and that of His kingdom there should be no end.

Now Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, was very much troubled by these words of the angel, and sat brooding on what this strange mystery might mean, that his beautiful maiden Mary should become a mother before the time. So, weary with his sorrow and his troubled thinking, he fell asleep. And in that sleep an angel came to him and said, "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary your wife home, for what is begot-

ten in her comes from the Holy Spirit"—the Spirit of God.

Then Joseph awoke, happy and at peace, and marveling at this wonderful thing which had come to them, and took Mary home to care for her with reverence and tenderness until the divine Child should be born.

You already know how after some time they came to Bethlehem, and that in the lowly inn Jesus was born, illuminating with His infant glory all those who stood near Him.

Eight days after His birth the Child was circumcised: a religious ceremony peculiar to the Jews, for Mary and Joseph of course were pious and devout people, and would fulfill every command of the law of their religion.

Then about thirty-three days later, when what the Jews called the purification of the Mother was completed, Mary and Joseph set forth from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, six miles distant, to present the Child to God in the great Temple, according to the Jewish custom that every first-born male child belonged to Jehovah, and should be presented to Him in His Temple. But in this instance the Presentation had a far more holy significance.

Along the road to Jerusalem, then, the Holy Family made their way. As they advanced the olive, chestnut, walnut and palm trees increased

in number. Many fig trees too were planted by the roadside, as it was believed that dust made them grow better. These belonged to the public, and anyone might pick and eat their fruit in its season. Thus the country became more and more agreeable, and soon they were passing the many gardens with which Jerusalem was at that time surrounded.

The city itself, with its ascending terraces covered with buildings of stone, castles, towers and high massive walls, looked, as indeed it was, like a gloomy and powerful fortress; but at its top, gleaming with snowy marble and ruddy gold, the Temple rose like a superb and glowing diadem.

Let us imagine the impressive spectacle of this Church to which Mary and Joseph were now bringing the Child for His Presentation. It consisted of many buildings and courts and terraces rising upward on the hill, and culminating at the summit in the Temple-House itself, in which was the Holy of Holies where God's Spirit was believed to be constantly present. This Temple-House was built of white marble, with a flat roof studded with innumerable golden spikes from which the sun was brilliantly reflected. In front of the Temple-House was a portico, and the entrance was heavily gilded, the doors standing open, but the sacred interior hidden by a curtain brought from Babylon, and

woven of many colors. Above the doorway were carved in gold magnificent clusters of grapes, each cluster being of the size of a man. Columns and double cloisters, rich mosaics, red and white marbles, gates of gold, silver and the still more valuable Corinthian brass combined to form a scene of the richest Oriental luxuriance. The topmost Temple-House, of dazzling gold and white, could be seen for many miles around, and devout Jews turned toward it when they prayed. Below this there were the inner courts and outer courts, and every necessary place for the lambs, kids and oxen brought by the people to be sacrificed after the ancient Jewish custom.

There were rooms for wood for the great fires, for the offal which would remain after such immense offerings of flesh; there were laundries for the constant washing of garments and of vessels required by the law, there were guard-rooms, a well-house—everything, in short, for use in a Temple so vast and so full of religious activity that it is related no less than twenty thousand priests were employed in serving its many altars and conducting its endless ceremonies.

Three times a day trumpets were blown—as Christian churches ring their bells—three blasts when the gates were opened, nine when the morning sacrifice began, and nine at the sacrifice of the evening. The Temple was always thronged

with pious Jews, offering sacrifices, bringing thank-offerings for relief from illness or other woes, praying and performing numerous religious rites.

At the great feasts of the Dedication, of Tabernacles, of the Passover, people thronged to Jerusalem from every part of the country. The Jewish historian Josephus says that at some of the feasts as many as three million strangers came to Jerusalem. We can imagine then, the extraordinarily crowded streets, and can understand how Our Lord Jesus Christ in His boyhood was once thought to be lost in those crowds.

During certain religious feasts there were dances by torchlight in one of the courts, dances which lasted all through the night and were enlivened by the music of harps, dulcimers, timbals and trumpets, the entire Temple being illuminated with great torches and cressets. There were processions in which the fruit and animals to be offered as sacrifices were carried in baskets, the bullock for the peace-offering walking ahead, his proud horns gilded and decorated with an olive wreath, and all marching to the music of pipes.

What became of all the living creatures that were sacrificed in the Temple? Those parts considered by the Jews "unclean" were either entirely consumed on the smoking altars, or cast aside,

while the remainder or "clean" parts were eaten by the priests and the people according to the various rites and customs in each case. We see, therefore, how much materialism—the service of mere bodily things and thoughts—entered into the Jews' religion, even though they had the true and spiritual idea of worshipping one God, and not idols, and so we shall understand better what is to follow in our story.

To this wonderful Temple, then, Mary and Joseph brought the Child. According to the law they should have offered a lamb as a burnt offering, and in addition a young pigeon or turtle dove as a sin offering, but probably they were too poor at the time to afford such costly gifts, and Mary only offered, as the law permitted under such circumstances, two doves.

When they had done this, and complied with all the other religious requirements of the Presentation, two remarkable incidents occurred. A man whose name was Simeon entered the Temple to pray. He was a godly man who believed that before he should die he should see the Messiah. Looking about him, he perceived Mary and Joseph and the Child. Instantly, by some spiritual insight, he recognized the Infant Jesus, and taking Him joyfully in his arms, he "blessed God, and said, 'Now, Master, thou canst let thy servant go, and go in peace, as thou didst prom-

ise; for mine eyes have seen thy saving power.' ” Then Simeon blessed them, all three, and went away rejoicing, leaving Mary and Joseph full of surprise that he should have known the Child. After Simeon had departed, an aged widow named Hannah, who was about eighty-four years old, and was a prophetess passing all her time in the Temple fasting and praying, also came to them and immediately knew the Child, and gave thanks to God, telling all who expected Him that the great event had come—she had seen the Messiah!

After this Joseph was again visited in a dream by “the angel of the Lord,” who warned him that the Child was in danger from King Herod, and that he must take Him and his Mother into Egypt and remain there until the angel should return and bring him word. Then Joseph was filled with fear for the Child, and, Egypt being near at the South, he took the Mother and Child there in the night, and no one might see them or know their hiding-place, and there they remained in safety until Herod’s death.

In the meanwhile, Herod had waited in vain for the return of the three Wise Men from Bethlehem. Realizing at length that they had dared to disobey him and would not come, and not knowing where the Child was whose rivalry he feared in the loyalty of the people, Herod became

violently enraged. He gave orders that all the young children of two years old and less, who were to be found in Bethlehem and the surrounding country, should be mercilessly slain. This tyrannical act of a heartless king is known in history as the Massacre of the Innocents.

Herod the Great was now about seventy years old, and had reigned thirty-seven years—years of wickedness, of sinful intrigue and wretched unhappiness. His life of vice and sin had resulted in partial madness. Furthermore, historians tell us that his body was wrecked by a horrible disease which caused him constant suffering, and made him offensive to all those who came near him. To him life had become so unbearable that one day, in his last illness, he asked for an apple, with a knife to cut it, and while for a moment the eyes of his attendants were not upon him, he attempted to put an end to his misery by thrusting the knife into his heart. But in this desperate action he did not succeed. He was then taken to the hot sulphur baths of Callirhoë as a last resort to lessen his sufferings, but this severe treatment only made him worse. He ordered that he should be carried to the beautiful city of roses, Jericho, that he might end his miserable days there.

But even in the midst of such suffering he had enough wicked energy to command the execution

of his son Antipater, who had attempted to poison him. This was the third son whom this unnatural father had put to death. His sons, you must remember, were not all children of the same mother, for Herod had several wives as well as a harem.

When at last this terrible man was really dying, he heard the crowds in the streets rejoicing openly that the Jewish people were soon to be rid of him, the "blood-thirsty monster." This so angered him that even in his last moments he had the strength to plot murder. He commanded that all the chief men of the cities of Judæa should be summoned to Jericho, that they should be treacherously locked in the vast hippodrome of the city, and that at the moment of his death they should all be killed. In this way he thought to prevent the people from rejoicing over his own death. This was the last incredibly cruel action of Herod "the Great," for his death immediately followed.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

Now at the time of Herod's death, Joseph, living quietly in Egypt with Mary and the Child, was once more visited by an angel of the Lord in a dream. And the angel said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel: for those who sought the child's life are dead."

So Joseph took Mary and the Child back into Israel—as the country of the Jews was called—in obedience to the angel, and they returned to their own beloved village of Nazareth in the province of Galilee. There they lived for many years, and that is why our Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of as "the Nazarene."

Let us see now what manner of life was His—He who was the Son of God, sent to this earth to live a human life just as we do. It was not customary among the Jews to write biographies of people, as writers do now, telling all the details of their lives. Moreover, there was not so much interest in children and childhood then as there began to be after Our Lord showed the people

how much **He** loved children, and that childhood is so pure and true that we must all become as little children—be as pure and true as they are—if we wish to enter into the kingdom of **Heaven**. So, unfortunately, there is scarcely anything written about the youth of **Jesus** in the Gospels, which treat chiefly of the last three and a half years of **His** life when **He** had begun actively to teach and preach. But before that time **He** had lived nearly thirty years in Nazareth. What did **He** do, how did **He** live?

We can learn much about **His** life from our knowledge of the lives of the Nazarenes at that time, and even now, for in Eastern lands there is but little change from century to century; and many historians have gathered much enlightening information. We know, therefore, that the children of Nazareth wear red garments—kaftans—girdled at the waist and having very long sleeves; or brightly colored tunics made of cloth or silk, and belted with a sash of several colors. Sometimes they wear over these a blue or white jacket, so that their appearance is gay and Oriental. According to the custom of the country, their little shoes or sandals are taken off before they enter the house. This is done in order to keep clean and immaculate the mats on which they say their prayers.

The houses in the village of Nazareth are white,

and generally of stone, with one or two stories, and flat roofs where the people often sit to enjoy the coolness of the evening. Within the houses you find the mats lying near the walls, and a wooden chest painted in colors to hold books or other family belongings and treasures. Quilts, used as beds, made of vividly colored material, are laid on a shelf which runs around the wall, and holds also the bowls and pitchers of earthenware in everyday use. From the center of the ceiling hangs a lamp. Near the door stand large red clay water jars, which hold the water for daily need, and in the spouts green leaves and twigs are thrust to keep the water cool.

The little town is plentifully shaded with fig, orange, olive and pomegranate trees, and the simple houses are beautified by vines. There are birds in the quiet gardens, murmuring doves, the hoopoe, and the blue roller-bird which is colored like a sapphire and is seen everywhere in Palestine. There is a richly flowing fountain, and various wells where the women of the village draw their water, carrying it home on their heads or shoulders in graceful vessels of earthenware. The fountain is still called "The Virgin's Fountain" in memory of the Mother of Jesus, who is said to have carried its bright water home when our Lord was a little child.

The food of the Nazarenes is of the simplest

kind—a bowl of rice and meat and some stewed fruit comprise the usual diet. The food is served on a tray set upon a painted wooden stool in the middle of the room. Before the meal, and after it, a brass bowl and pitcher are brought by the servant, if there is one, or by the youngest child, and water is poured over each one's hands.

In such a house, and living in the humblest circumstances, did Jesus grow as a child; and there we can imagine Him, gentle, patient, loving. For though He was divine, He bore our human life just as we bear it ourselves, that He might be in perfect sympathy with all our temptations and weaknesses, and that He could show us, as He did, how temptation and weakness can be overcome.

So we can picture His obscure but happy childhood in Nazareth—that He loved, probably, to play about in Joseph's carpenter shop, with its sweet-smelling chips and shavings, its saws, planes, wrenches, in use or waiting their turn for usefulness, a carpenter's bench to work on, planks standing against the wall ready to be made into tables, or chairs, or chests, or whatever was required, a pot of glue, and perhaps a finished table or chest awaiting its new owner. Every boy would enjoy such an interesting place; so Jesus, being in every way healthy and normal, must have liked it also. It is probable

that He helped Joseph in whatever boyish way He could, and that He helped His Mother Mary also with her work of setting the house in order.

We know very well that Jesus was a thoughtful and studious boy, too, who cared much for His books and the wisdom He could gather from them. This we know because when He began to teach He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish law and of the Holy Scriptures—our Old Testament—which contained the past history of the Jews and all the sayings of their great prophets. He went to Church, also—the synagogue, as the Jews called it—and once in His boyhood He did a wonderful thing there, which is told later on.

He must have loved this beautiful land where, for thirty years, He lived nearly all His earthly life. All around Nazareth the scenery is very picturesque. The fields and gardens are separated by hedges of cactus, and the whole country is green and full of light and cheerfulness. Even the shepherd boys are dressed in bright colors. Gay flowers bloom in spring along the borders of the waving cornfields, and fragrant thyme grows on the hillside where the village lies. From this hill He could see the beautiful plain of Jezreel, with its feathery palms and olives.

It is probable that the boy Jesus was inclined sometimes to be alone and thoughtful, because

His later development would seem to indicate it; for, as a man, He constantly went into the country seeking nature's blessed silence, and beauty, and solitude. Perhaps it was this pensiveness and loneliness which caused Him to be misunderstood by His relatives, which we learn from certain later incidents in the Gospels. This must have taught Him to be patient and loving, and helped to prepare Him for the great misunderstanding to which He was to be subjected in future years, and to which He was to sacrifice His life. But all that the Gospels tell us literally of His growth as a child we find in these two beautiful verses of St. Luke:

"And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was on him." ¹

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." ²

¹ Luke ii, 40.

² Luke ii, 52.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM

Children in Oriental countries develop earlier than in our western lands. At the age of twelve a boy began to learn whatever trade he intended to live by, and while before that time he was called "little," after twelve years he was treated more as a grown-up person, and called "a son of the Law." Until he was twelve his parents could sell him as a slave if they wished to, because that was the custom of their time, but after that age it was forbidden. And now we shall see what happened on Jesus' first journey to Jerusalem when He was twelve years old, and can judge what manner of child He was.

It was the time of the great springtime Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims gathered there from all parts of Palestine, in order to offer their sacrifices in the Temple, and to participate in all the religious ceremonies of the feast-days. Although Jerusalem was eighty Roman miles ¹ from Nazareth, and the journey would have to be made

¹ A Roman mile was about 1620 English yards.

laboriously on camels, mules and asses, or on foot, Jesus' parents prepared piously to make this pilgrimage, according to their yearly habits.

On the whole it must have been a happy journey, for the Jewish people were always musical, and they beguiled the way with drums and pipes and timbrels (which resemble tambourines) and harps, or stopped to rest in the shady gardens by the wayside, eating dates and melons for their refreshment, and drinking the cool water from every well they passed. A description of their cheerful journey reminds us in a certain way of the Canterbury pilgrimages in England, which began in the thirteenth century, and are so well portrayed by the poet Chaucer.

We can imagine the natural delight of the boy Jesus in such a journey, and how it must have been mingled in Him with His infinitely deeper consciousness of the religious nature of the pilgrim's joy. And when they came at last in sight of Jerusalem, and He caught His first glimpse of the great frowning fortified city, and towering above it on the hill the magnificent Temple with its gleaming marble pillars and golden roof, and thought that it was the Temple of the great Jehovah, He who was also His loving Father in Heaven, His young heart must have leapt with holiest emotion.

They probably camped outside Jerusalem

after the custom of strangers, building temporary shelters for themselves of matting and boughs, for the city could not accommodate the nearly three million visitors who usually came to the Passover; and when they entered the densely thronged streets, and made their way slowly and with much difficulty to the Temple, the bustle and excitement of the crowds of Jews, of Greeks, of Phœnicians, of Romans, must have seemed strange indeed to these quiet village people. At the Temple they made their obligatory offering of a Paschal lamb, and a week was then passed in attending the services of the Temple, and listening to the discourses of the Rabbis and other learned preachers and teachers of the people. Then they started on their homeward journey.

Now when Mary and Joseph had been a day's journey on the road leading back to Nazareth, they suddenly discovered that Jesus was not with them, and passed a day "searching for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances." But no one had seen Him or knew where He was. So they were obliged to turn back again to Jerusalem to seek Him. But what a task, to find a child of twelve years among those multitudes of people! How anxious they must have been, and how self-reproachful at not having guarded Him more watchfully. But probably His serious and responsible character, even at that

age, had made them trust Him more than usual—and in truth their trust was not misplaced. For after a distracted search of three days they found Him safe and happy in His beloved Temple, His Father's house, "seated among the teachers" (that is, the religious teachers) "listening to them, and asking them questions, till all his hearers were amazed at the intelligence of his own answers."¹

His parents were astonished to find Him there. His Mother rebuked Him gently for having caused them so much fear and worry, and to her He made this wonderful reply:

" 'Why did you look for me?' he said, 'Did you not know I had to be at my Father's house?' " ²

But his poor parents did not understand exactly what He meant, though St. Luke tells us that "his mother treasured up everything in her heart." This is not surprising. Even though they knew that Jesus had come to Mary by a miracle, still how hard it would be to understand, to realize, that they were cherishing the Son of God as if He were only a little human child!

But it is very plain that Jesus knew His own being and destiny, and that He had already begun to prepare Himself for His work here on earth. Yet though He knew this, He behaved

¹ Luke ii, 47.

² Luke ii, 49.

now as He did through all His earthly life—He subjected His own will to what was right and of lawful importance. He left the beautiful Temple, and the wise men to whom He longed to listen, and went quietly home to Nazareth with His Mother and Joseph, and obeyed them.

There the tranquil daily life went on as before, Jesus working with Joseph at the carpenter's bench, studying the Holy Scriptures, the burning words of the great prophets, the books of Jewish Law, the Psalms of David; learning Hebrew, which was even then a dead language—that is, was no longer in current use—and learning Greek, which was spoken in much of the surrounding country. The common language of His people was Aramaic, an ancient Syrian tongue also used by the Chaldeans, and this was the language or dialect in which Jesus generally spoke. The Gospels, which tell us, strictly speaking, all that we know of our Lord's life, were originally written in Greek.

There, then, in Nazareth Jesus lived for thirty years—a happy, industrious, studious, peaceful and sinless life. Sinless: think what that means, for He was tempted, we are told, like ourselves. We have no record of any other sinless man but Him. It is no wonder that early Christian legends say that wherever He passed a Shechînah, or soft cloud of light, was about Him. We are

not asked to believe legends literally, but they are often based upon the profoundest truth. As to this one, we know that something which seems like light, some calm and holy and illuminating influence, is radiated by every noble, loving, self-commanding, godlike soul. How much more would this be true of the sinless and perfect soul of Jesus.

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS IS BAPTIZED AND TEMPTED

Now during the thirty years in which Jesus was growing, developing and working in Nazareth, the state of men's minds and morals was becoming worse. Many even denied the existence of any God at all, and it naturally followed that when they did not believe in God they did not believe much in being good either. But though men forget to love God, God does not forget to love men, and when sin and evil were apparently gaining control over them, the Divine Providence was preparing the means of helping them to save themselves.

About this time, therefore, people began to hear rumors of a strange man who had appeared in the wilderness—that is, the barren wild country lying twelve miles east of Jerusalem and extending to the Jordan River—and who wore only a tunic of camel's hair bound round with a leather girdle. It was said that he lived on the honey of the wild bees swarming among the rocks, and on locusts, which were never eaten but by the most wretched beggars. He was described as

an ascetic of the extreme type—a man who denied himself all comfort; he was thin and worn in body, burned dark by the hot Eastern sun; his hair hung lank and uncut on his bony shoulders, but in the cadaverous face his eyes shone like wonderful jewels with the living fire of his fearless and glorious soul. And this man, half-fed, half-clothed, doing without everything which makes life pleasant to the body, was preaching there in the desert places, rebuking the rich, warning the powerful, threatening the wicked. The rumors of him and his preaching grew and spread, and people went to see what kind of man this could be—some drawn by the continual expectation of a Messiah, some by that hunger for truth which exists in us all, some by mere idleness and curiosity. But so impressed were those who listened to his fiery words, that though the wilderness was a dangerous region, haunted by robbers and wild beasts, and at that time, in some parts, by crocodiles crawling along the low banks of the Jordan River, with its rank weeds, its marshes, its willow, tamarisk and acacia trees, yet the people came in crowds to hear what John the Baptist had to say to them.

There were two chief things which he had to say: That they must repent of their sins, not later, not next year or even next week, but now; and that One was coming after him who would

teach them with authority, One whose sandals he was not worthy to carry.

Even the proud and powerful Sadducees and Pharisees came to hear him, and he feared them no more than the rocks around. He called them "a brood of vipers." But so great was his power, and so deeply did the truthful swords of his words cut into their sinful hearts, that some of them submitted to be baptized with other repentant sinners in the Jordan.

"Then Jerusalem, and the whole of Judæa, and all the Jordan-district went out to him and got baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins."¹ For John the Baptist was no mere preacher. He believed in action following words. His was a practical religion. He personally baptized thousands of people, striving with them with all his might to repent and to show their repentance in deeds, not words, exhorting them and struggling with their pride, their stupid self-satisfaction, their hardness of heart. The people, influenced in spite of themselves by his biting words, asked, "Then what are we to do?" And he replied, "Let everyone who possesses two shirts share with him who has none, and let him who has food do likewise."² And he said, "Now, produce fruits that answer to your

¹ Matt. iii, 5-6.

² Luke iii, 11.

repentance," that is, do such deeds as shall prove that you do really repent of your sins, and desire to be good. And he preached to each one according to his own sins. To the publicans—that is, the tax-gatherers—he said, "Never exact more than your fixed rate." And when the soldiers asked, "And what are we to do?" he replied, "Never extort money, never lay a false charge, but be content with your pay." For it is related that the soldiers were often discontented with what was given them.

John spoke with so much authority and truth that the people, always looking for the coming of a Messiah, began to inquire among themselves if John might not be that Messiah. So they asked him, but he replied that another was coming, greater than he. He said, "I am the voice of one who cries in the desert, 'level the way for the Lord'—as the prophet Isaiah said." ³

Then they asked him why he baptized at all if he were not the Christ, the Messiah himself? " 'I am baptizing with water,' John replied, 'but my successor is among you, One whom you do not recognize, and I am not fit to untie the string of his sandal.' " ⁴

The next day, St. John tells us in his Gospel—and we must not confuse these two holy men who

³ John i, 23.

⁴ John i, 26-27.

have the same name, St. John the Apostle who wrote the Gospel, and St. John the Baptist—St. John tells us in his Gospel that a Stranger came among the people, and approached the Baptist in order to be baptized like all the others. But He was not like the others. Though clad in the long flowing garment generally worn by the common people of the country, there was something in His carriage, in His whole appearance—in His calm and noble brow, His candid and compassionate eyes, the combination of gentleness and power in His personality—which set Him apart from all the rest. We know that this majesty of His person often affected His disciples and others later on.

Like all the other people, however, He entered the water and bowed Himself humbly beneath the hands of the Baptist. But when, being baptized, the Stranger silently prayed, John the Baptist saw with a beating heart that the heaven was opened, and that from it descended the Holy Ghost (that is, the Spirit of God) in the form of a dove upon the Stranger, and “a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my Son, the Beloved, to-day have I become thy Father.’”⁵ And afterwards John said, “Now I did see it, and I testify that he is the Son of God.”

As we see, this holy Stranger was Jesus,

⁵ Luke iii, 22.

grown now to manhood, who came to John because John was a true prophet of God, and was baptized like any man or woman to show that He was full of patience, obedience and submission to the Law.

The rite of baptism, as John administered it, meant that each one, having truly repented of his sins, was washed clean of them and could enter the new Messianic community—the company of those who looked for the Messiah, the company of the new Kingdom of God.—How beautiful it is to think that God's promises give us all the hope that we may be baptized again each morning, baptized by God's new day, His rising sun, His sweet morning air, so that each day we rise refreshed and can begin again, hopefully and confidently, our battle with the sin and weakness we are constantly finding in ourselves. But as Jesus was without sin, His baptism was only an example in obedience.

Still we must remember that, though without sin, He was not without the temptation to sin. From this baptism in the Jordan River He was "led by the Spirit in the desert," where for forty long days the devil tempted Him. Jesus had no food but the roots and wild plants of the desert, and the devil said, If you are the Son of God change these stones into bread, that you may eat. But Jesus only rebuked him. Then the

devil offered Him worldly power and riches, if Jesus would worship him. "Jesus answered him, 'It is written, You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.' " ⁶ Then the devil transported Him to the great Temple at Jerusalem, and "set him on a pinnacle," telling Him that if He were really the Son of God to throw Himself down, and God would save Him. Then Jesus only replied, "It has been said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." Finding that Jesus could not be tempted into sin by anything whatever, the devil "left him till a fit opportunity arrived." You will notice that St. Luke says he departed for a time only, meaning that as he comes continually tempting us, so also Jesus, having taken our burden of flesh upon Him, would also be tempted again and again.

After this long fasting and temptation in the wilderness "Jesus came back in the power of the Spirit to Galilee." Thus, as He controlled and subjugated His body, so did His own spirit grow in power and strength.

⁶ Luke iv, 8.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

Some time after Jesus had fasted, and struggled with the devil's temptations in the desert, a great trouble befell John the Baptist.

Among the rich and powerful men whom he had dared to rebuke for their wickedness was the "ethnarch," or governor, of Galilee and Peræa, Herod Antipas. This man was one of the sons of Herod the Great, and though a weaker man than his father, he too was both cruel and abominable in character. Recently he had divorced his wife without any just cause, and had committed the wickedness of taking his brother Philip's wife away from him and marrying her himself. This woman's name was Herodias, and she too had inherited the cruelty of Herod the Great, for she was his grand-daughter. So this marriage was also considered by the Jews as incestuous. All the people were shocked by Herod Antipas' defiant sin, and John the Baptist had fearlessly told him that the marriage was not lawful.

Now Herod Antipas lived in his luxurious palace at a place called Machærus in Peræa, just be-

yond the Jordan River, at a distance of only about six miles from that part of the river where John was baptizing and preaching. Herod Antipas was much annoyed by the sight of the vast crowds who passed near his castle on their way to listen to John. He feared that there would be a revolution among the people, knowing that they hated his past crimes and his present lawless marriage, and that in that event the Roman emperor might be angered and would deprive him, Herod, of his position as governor over Peræa and Galilee. So, urged by his pitiless wife, who hated John because of his preaching against her marriage, Herod Antipas ordered the Baptist's arrest. John was put in chains, taken from his people, and imprisoned in the terrible fortress at Machærus, near Herod's castle. This fortress was the strongest fortified place in the land next to Jerusalem itself. It was surrounded on three sides by deep precipices, and its walls were so strong that some parts of them remain even to the present day, nearly two thousand years later. Here John was held prisoner for many months, until the tragic event of which we shall soon hear.

Leaving John in prison, we will now go back a little and follow the steps of Jesus after His baptism by John. The day following the baptism John saw Jesus pass by, and he exclaimed, "Look, there is the lamb of God, who is to remove

the sin of the world!" Two of John's disciples stood near, young men of Galilee, of whom one was named Andrew. They heard what John said, and they turned and slowly followed Jesus. When Jesus saw them coming behind Him, He stopped and said to them kindly, "What do you want?" They replied, asking Him where He dwelt, and Jesus said, "Come and see." So they went with Him, and stayed all that day, and no doubt Jesus taught them and moved them deeply with His words. For Andrew went to seek his brother, who was no other than Peter, called Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" It is not difficult to understand what must have been Andrew's joy and excitement at such a discovery. So he brought Peter to Jesus. When Jesus saw Him He said, "You are Simon, the son of John? Your name is to be Cephas," meaning "Peter" or "rock."

Nothing is said in the Gospel of the other young man who first accompanied Andrew, but it is believed by some scholars that he was St. John the Evangelist, who became greatly beloved of Jesus, and that he omitted the mention of his own name in the Gospel because he himself was relating the history.

Andrew and Peter were fishermen, and so were some of the other disciples who were chosen afterwards, and who left their nets in the sea to follow

Jesus. All of the twelve disciples were simple men, without much education, earning their own living, chosen by our Lord in His divine wisdom, as a sufficient means, as we can now see, to spread His words abroad over the earth. Jesus chose them from time to time as He had need, and their names were Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, brothers and fishermen; James, the son of Zebedæus, and John his brother, fishermen; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer; James the son of Alphæus and Lebbæus whose surname was Thaddæus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.¹

These men all followed Jesus at a mere word from Him, leaving their daily occupations, their families, their friends, to devote their lives to His love and His service, and some of them to suffer martyrdom in later years. We can infer, then, that there was something kingly and impressive, something leader-like and yet tender and persuasive in His appearance and manner. As all people who are truly good are usually pleasant or in some way attractive to behold, it is but natural that the holy and sinless Jesus should have been majestic and beautiful. Both St. Jerome and St. Augustine, saints of the early Christian Church, described Jesus in the words of Psalm xiv, 2-3: "Thou art fairer than the

¹ Matt. x, 2-4.

children of men." While none of those who followed Him have left any record of His appearance, neither have His enemies said anything against it; and as in the Gospels there are several instances of the wonderful effect which the mere glance of Jesus produced upon others, there must have been in His eyes, in His face and mien, something singularly affecting and inspiring.

Hearing now of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus returned northward into His own province of Galilee, followed by His first disciples, while others were added from day to day to the little band. This was the way in which Bartholomew came. When Philip, already a disciple, told Bartholomew that they had found the Messiah—who was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the carpenter, they said—Bartholomew was amazed, and exclaimed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And Philip replied, all joy and eagerness, "Come and see."

Why did Bartholomew say those strange words, can anything good come out of Nazareth? The province of Galilee, where Nazareth lay, was not regarded with respect by the Jews of the other provinces, because its population was mixed, was partly Gentile and not pure Jewish, and because the people were less cultured than elsewhere. In Galilee there were Phœnicians,

Arabs and Greeks, and a dialect was spoken called Aramaic which, as has already been explained, was the usual language of Jesus. Therefore, not only did Jesus come in poverty and humbleness of life, but even from a province which was generally despised, thus teaching ever and always the lesson of humility.

When Bartholomew came, wondering, to see this Son of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth, whom Philip announced as the King, the Messiah, Jesus said, "Here is a genuine Israelite! There is no guile in him"—no craftiness or deceit. Bartholomew was surprised by this, for he had never before seen Jesus, so he asked, "How do you know me?" And Jesus answered, "When you were under that fig tree, before ever Philip called you, I saw you."

We may suppose that Bartholomew, knowing that he had not been in Jesus' sight, was awed by this evidence of His power, for he said, "Rabbi"—that is, Master—"You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Then Jesus answered, "You believe because I told you I had seen you under that fig tree? You shall see more than that." ²

² John i, 47-51.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST MIRACLES

Very soon did Jesus begin to show "more than that" to His followers and the people, and at this time He performed His first miracle.

The word miracle means something very full of wonder, an event which is above the laws of nature, supernatural. No human being can change the laws of nature, but God, who created those laws, can of course change them in accordance with His Almighty Will. So Jesus, His Son, one with Him, was given this power, and used it in deeds of goodness and mercy, that men might believe in God and might become good.

When Jesus left the Jordan River, after His baptism, He returned to Nazareth and to Capharnahum in Galilee, and began at once to teach in the synagogues, or churches, of those towns. About this time, in the little village of Cana, near Nazareth, there was a marriage to which Jesus and His disciples were bidden, and Jesus' Mother, Mary, also, and perhaps others of His relatives. Jesus went. He never seemed to shun innocent feasting or mirth, or to see any harm

in cheerfulness and gayety when virtue and peace were present.

They were not rich people whose wedding was being celebrated, and suddenly in the midst of the rejoicing the wine, which had been provided for the guests, was exhausted. Jesus' Mother told Him what had happened. Probably she felt sorry for the well-meaning host, whose good will was greater than his means. Jesus replied to her, "Woman, what have you to do with me? My time has not come yet."

The word "Woman" here was not disrespectful. As the word was then used it was full of respect. Jesus may have intended to recall gently to His Mother that He was much more than merely her son. But she was not troubled by His words; she understood Him, and telling the servants to do whatever He should bid them, she waited with motherly patience and faith.

There were six large stone water pots standing there, which could hold, each, about fifteen gallons, and were used for the daily supply of water for bathing and drinking. Jesus commanded the servants to fill these pots with water, and they did so. Perhaps they smiled among themselves at this strange order given them in the midst of the feast, nudging one another and inclined to good-natured ridicule, as the ignorant or incredulous often are.

Jesus said to them, " 'Now draw some out and take it to the manager of the feast.' They did so." And lo, the water had become wine.¹

The servants had grown silent now with wonder and awe; here was something they could not understand, yet had seen with their own eyes; and the manager of the feast, not knowing where this wine had come from, was so pleased with the taste of it that he called the bridegroom and said, that whereas men generally gave their guests the best wine first, he had kept the best for the last.

Now the bridegroom in his turn was surprised, for he had no better wine than he had already given, and indeed he had not had wine enough of any kind, so the explanation was given him, and the account of the miracle passed from guest to guest. We can imagine how they must have looked at Jesus who had wrought this miracle in their presence, and how they must have gone soberly away at the end of the feast to talk of the miracle which they had seen, and to conjecture whether this were not indeed the Messiah, who *seemed* to be only the carpenter, Jesus, of the neighboring town of Nazareth.

It was probably soon after this that Jesus went to His own home in Nazareth, where an interesting scene, typical of His later struggles and suf-

¹ John ii, 8.

fering, occurred in the little synagogue. Here everyone knew Him only as the son of Joseph the carpenter, Himself a carpenter also. St. Luke in his fourth chapter says simply, "Then he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the sabbath he entered the synagogue as was his custom. He stood up to read the lesson."

Now the book which was given Him to read was that of the great prophet Isaiah, containing the prophecy of the Messiah's coming, and this prophecy He read, beginning, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."² When he had read the prophecy, "folding up the book, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down."

Then, while everybody in the synagogue looked intently at Him, He spoke: "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The people were now truly astonished. They looked at each other, somewhat shocked, and said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" Is not this the son of the carpenter who dares to stand here and tell us that it was he of whom our great prophet was speaking? Jesus saw their disbelief, and said, "I tell you truly, no prophet is ever welcome in his native place." And then he cited to them examples from history of the prophets who had been rejected and denied by their own people.

But the people were indignant and furious at

² Luke iv, 18.

His words, even murderous toward Him, for they "rose up, put him out of the town, and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, in order to hurl him down. But he made his way through them and went off."³

How did this happen? What was the strange power He exerted over that suddenly enraged and brutal crowd—enraged because they thought Him blasphemous in thus proclaiming Himself the Messiah, and brutal because they were given over to senseless anger? The Gospel does not give us an answer directly, but in reading it we learn what a kingly dignity dwelt in Jesus' manner toward all men, and we can surmise that when the bullying crowd had brought Him to the top of the hill, and were preparing to kill Him, He turned and looked at them, or spoke some significant words which made them afraid to do Him harm. It was not His time to die. He was only now beginning His ministry on earth—that short ministry lasting about three and a half years, and by which the whole course of the world's destiny was to be changed, according to the Will of God.

Jesus then sorrowfully left His own native and well-beloved Nazareth, which refused to listen to Him, and went to the city of Capharnahum about twenty-five miles away, and there, in the

³ Luke iv, 29-30.

synagogue where He taught, the people also were astonished at His words, "for he taught them like an authority, not like the scribes." But though Jesus' teaching, new and startling as it was, greatly surprised the people of Capharna-hum, it did not enrage them. They allowed Him to speak.⁴

One day in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching came a sick man, who had "a spirit of an unclean dæmon."⁵ The Jews believed that certain diseases—probably epilepsy, insanity and kindred troubles—were caused by a dæmon entering into the body of a man, possessing and controlling him, and making him ill. But whatever was the cause or nature of this disease known as being "possessed of a devil"—and we have no positive knowledge of the subject—this poor man in the synagogue was suffering and wretched, and he cried out to Jesus, "Ha! Jesus of Nazareth, what business have you with us? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, you are God's holy One!"⁶ Then Jesus spoke to him, commanding the unclean spirit to come out of him, and he was cured that same instant. The people, astonished, began to talk among themselves and say, What is this wonderful word that is immediately obeyed by unclean

⁴ Mark i, 22.

⁵ Luke iv, 33.

⁶ Luke iv, 34.

spirits? So that the fame of this cure and of Jesus' teaching "spread over all the surrounding country." ⁷

What Jesus now taught was the same that John the Baptist taught: "Repent, the Reign of heaven is near." ⁸ That is, be sorry for what we have done that is wrong, and do wrong no more.

⁷ Luke iv, 37.

⁸ Matt. iv, 17.

CHAPTER XI

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The town of Capharnahum which Jesus now chose for His dwelling-place and as the scene of His active work as a teacher, was situated at the northwest of the beautiful harp-shaped Sea of Galilee, sometimes called Lake of Tiberias or Lake of Gennesaret. The waters of this sea were blue and sparkling like a jewel, and the mountains around it formed a picturesque setting. The shores were luxuriant with flowers and fruit, for all the fruits of Palestine grew in this fertile region—figs, grapes, olives, oranges, pomegranates. The grapes and figs were ripe during ten months of the year, and there were other fruits that ripened all the year round. The heat was then tempered by the foliage of numberless trees,—cypresses, walnuts, almonds, pines, myrtles, laurels, palms and balsams. In after years, when the Mohammedans conquered the country, these trees were destroyed and the land became hot and barren as it now is; but at the time of Jesus it was a blossoming and fruitful garden.

The western bank of the Sea of Galilee rose in highly cultivated terraces, behind which towered the mountains. In one part the mountains were divided, giving place to the lovely plain of Gennesaret, with its thousands of wild lilies. This plain lay for three miles along the sea, and within it, embowered in trees and flowers, was Capharnahum.

The eastern shore of the sea, on the other hand, was barren and precipitous, and presented a striking contrast to the luxuriant gardens of the western banks; but it was on this lonely and forbidding eastern shore that Jesus often sought solitude and peace from the exhausting labors of His preaching and healing, and the suffocating pressure of the great crowds who soon began to follow Him.

The sea itself, with its pure waters abounding in fish, was about fifteen miles long and six miles broad, and was then a scene of great activity. Several thousand vessels, of every kind known to the country, from the royal painted ships of Herod Antipas and the warships of the Romans, to the fishermen's little boats, floated upon it, because it lay on the route of the great caravans coming from Egypt on the southwest to Damascus in Syria on the northeast. These caravans of merchants and their attendants, bringing their goods to and fro, buying, selling and bargaining

on the way, filled the country with trade and labor, and brought in touch many men of many nations—Jews and Gentiles, Arabs from the desert, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Syrians, Romans and Greeks. The caravans gave work to the people as caravan guides, camel-drivers, packers and other laborers, but the greater part of the population cultivated the rich soil which so well repaid their efforts. It was therefore a promising land for the dissemination of the teaching of Jesus, and this was probably one cause of His choosing it.

Another cause may have been the nature of the people themselves, who were less rigid and obstinate than the Jews of Judæa. The Galileans were quick to anger, but also poetical and full of sensibility, and therefore more ready to listen to new words of Truth. Solomon composed his Song of Songs in Galilee. But still the people were considered half-foreign, half-Gentile by the Jews of Judæa, and despised for a certain clumsiness of speech and manner.

There is no full description of the town of Capharnahum and we have to picture it in our minds like other Oriental cities of that country and time, with narrow winding streets and low houses, but everywhere—as we are told—gardens and trees. Jesus' disciple Peter had his humble home here, and Jesus dwelt with him.

Now the mother of Peter's wife also lived in the house, and on the same day when Jesus healed the man of his unclean spirit in the synagogue, certain people came to tell Him that the poor woman was ill of a burning fever, and begged Him to heal her. So Jesus "went up to her and taking her hand made her rise; the fever left her at once and she ministered to them."¹

The news of this second cure went forth into the town, and so at evening—at sunset, the Gospel says—there was a pathetic and beautiful scene in Capharnahum. The people trustfully brought all their sick to the door of Peter's house—young and old, rich and poor—asking Jesus to cure them. "Indeed the whole town was gathered at the door." We can see that benignant Presence standing at the little door of Peter's simple house, with the sunset light falling upon Him, healing and speaking words of cheer and forgiveness to the poor sick folk—perhaps to the mother weeping over her suffering child, whose tears turned to smiles when the child arose, well and strong; to the poor old man stricken with the palsy, who at Jesus' touch and word became sound; to the epileptics, or lunatics, or those "possessed with dæmons," whom with a word or two He restored to reason and health.

It was only natural that multitudes should

¹ Mark i, 31.

throng to Him, but only natural too that He should grow weary under His burden of flesh, as men do after long-continued labor. So now He retired to rest; but after He had slept for a time He rose up "a great while before day," and went out to a "lonely spot" to pray. This was His frequent custom, and it was probably thus He renewed the spiritual strength for His work. But there was so great need of Him that He was rarely allowed to be alone for any length of time. Finding Him absent, His disciples now followed Him to His solitude, and said, "Everybody is looking for you." But Jesus replied that He must leave Capharnahum and go to other towns to teach them also, for "that is why I came out here."² His work, for which He knew He would have but a short time, must be well done. So He went out of Capharnahum and preached in the synagogues everywhere in Galilee, teaching and healing and blessing the people.

One day a leper came to Him and begged to be healed. "If you only choose, you can cleanse me," he said, beseeching Jesus. Now leprosy is one of the most terrible diseases known to mankind, for which no cure had ever been found. But Jesus "stretched his hand out in pity and touched him saying, 'I do choose, be cleansed.'

² Mark i, 38-39.

And the leprosy at once left him and he was cleansed.”³

Jesus told this leper to say nothing of how he was cured, perhaps partly because when the people heard of these wonderful cures they came to Him in such numbers that He was not able to teach them, and partly because His ministry was not to be devoted wholly to their bodies, as they would so readily incline to believe. But the poor leper, overcome with joy at his recovery, rushed forth and told the glorious news to everybody he met, so that Jesus could not enter the cities because of the people thronging to Him, and was obliged to remain in the desert places round about; and to these places the people came in multitudes from many cities, even from Jerusalem, and from Tyre and Sidon in Phœnicia, following Him wherever He went.

Once when Jesus had passed the entire night in prayer and repose on a lonely mountain, which is supposed to be that mountain near the Sea of Galilee called “Horns of Hattîn,”⁴ He was joined at early dawn by His disciples who were never contented except in His presence, for had He not chosen them to follow Him always, to share His poverty and suffering, His works of teaching and mercy? But Jesus saw that great

³ Mark i, 40-43.

⁴ Farrar's “Life of Christ,” p. 190.

multitudes of people had come also to seek Him, so He went to meet them, and healed them, curing them of all sorts of diseases, and forgiving their sins, filling their hearts with love and gratitude and joy. Then He began to teach them, and to preach the wonderful sermon which we know as "The Sermon on the Mount." It is written in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of St. Matthew, the only one of the apostles who has fully recorded it for us. Whether this sermon was delivered all at one time or on different occasions we do not know.

We can understand the surprise of the people, trained in the ancient Jewish ideas of morality, when they heard this sermon. In many ways it told them to do things exactly the opposite of those which they had always done and thought right—the old law of revenge, for instance, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,"—the law which permitted a man if he were injured, to injure in his turn the one who had wrought him harm. But Jesus taught them exactly the contrary.

In this sermon He also gave men The Lord's Prayer, in which they are taught to pray to God, not as the all-powerful creator of the universe, but as a loving father in Heaven.

CHAPTER XII

JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

As Jesus returned with His disciples from the mountain called "Horns of Hattîn" to Capharnahum, a certain army-captain, or "centurion," came to Him, begging Him to heal his servant who lay at his home stricken with the palsy. This army-captain was a Roman officer, having a hundred other Roman soldiers under his command. He must have been a kindly-disposed man, for he had built a synagogue for the conquered Jews where they could worship God in their own way; and the people liked him. Furthermore, he had a great gift, the gift of faith, and though he was a Roman and had been a heathen, he was able to see the truth and Divinity of Christ.

Therefore, when Jesus said, "I will come and heal him," the army-captain replied, "Sir, I am not fit to have you under my roof: only say the word, and my servant will be cured."

Jesus was touched by this perfect trust, and He said to His disciples, "I tell you truly, I have never met faith like this anywhere in Israel."

Then He spoke solemnly of the future fate of the unbelieving Jews. After this He turned to the captain and said, "Go; as you have had faith, your prayer is granted." And in that same hour the servant was cured.¹

Thus occurred another of the thirty-three miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, of which Matthew relates twenty, Mark eighteen, Luke nineteen and John seven. Each Evangelist wrote about those miracles which he knew. We are told that even the skeptical Jews have never denied Jesus' miracles, but thought He performed them "by means of the 'Tetragrammaton,' or sacred name"²—which was a Jewish superstition we need not here inquire into. Most of the Jews, however, would never believe that Jesus was the Messiah, was the Son of God. It was easier for them, as it is for many people, to believe in superstition than in Truth.

It was now spring, the time of the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. It has already been told how the people from all parts of Palestine, and beyond, gathered together at Jerusalem for this great feast of the Jewish religion. So Jesus went also, and we shall see what He did there in the Temple.

One of the large courts of the Temple was

¹ Matt. viii, 5-13.

² Farrar, note on p. 415.

called the Court of the Gentiles, and the Jews who traded in sheep and oxen and doves for the sacrifices had little by little brought them into this court for their better convenience in selling them. The money-changers also had ventured to bring their tables onto this consecrated ground, and no one rebuked them. These money-changers exchanged the money of the various pilgrims, which often consisted of copper or brass coins of different nations, for the "clean"—that is, religiously pure—silver money which the law required as an offering each pilgrim should make to the Temple. The money-changers charged a fee of five per cent on each exchange, and they were greedy to make, each, more than the others. So they had pushed their way nearer and nearer to the places where trade seemed most brisk. There they sat, therefore, under the four-columned arcades of the Court of the Gentiles, their tables covered with small piles of money, and all around them the thousands of poor, hot, crowded, ill-smelling beasts, which were waiting to be sold for the sacrifices. A shocking scene to be found at the entrance of the Holy Temple of God.

When Jesus, coming as a pilgrim with the other people to the Temple, beheld this odious desecration, He was possessed with "holy anger," the anger against blasphemy, the anger of God. He swiftly made "a scourge of cords," and lay-

ing about with this upon the men who tended the beasts, He drove them and all the animals out of the Temple. When this was done He went to the money-changers and overturned their tables, so that all the carefully arranged money rolled about on the floor; and while the furious brokers were picking up these precious coins, He said to the dove-sellers, "Away with these! My Father's house is not to be turned into a shop!"

The enraged Jews, who had not resisted this attack probably because it was so sudden and so unexpected, now turned upon Him and demanded by what right He drove them out. They knew in their hearts that they were in the wrong, that they had defiled the Holy House of God, but they wanted to know what sign He could give them to show that He had a right thus violently to teach them their duty. To this Jesus only replied, "Destroy this sanctuary, and I will raise it up in three days." They naturally thought He meant the Temple itself. So they said, scornfully, that forty-six years had been required to build that magnificent Temple, and would He rebuild it in three days? They must have laughed at Him in their blind contempt. But Jesus referred to the temple of His body, wherein dwelt the Spirit of God, and He meant that after His death His body, the temple, would arise in three days. And probably He meant to

show them that in comparison with the merely material Temple-church, no matter how superb and costly it was, the body of the Son of Man wherein dwelt God's Spirit, would be infinitely more wonderful, and represent infinitely more power, in being raised from the dead.³

But as usual they did not understand Him; their thoughts ran altogether in material channels. It was thus that most of them never could understand what Jesus meant when He spoke of the spiritual kingdom—they thought always of a king on a golden throne, dispensing rich worldly and fleshly blessings, not of the Son of God giving peace and happiness and life to the soul.

This act of Jesus, the forcible cleansing of the Temple, should be carefully considered by those who believe that He taught a consistent policy of non-resistance to evil. To the revengeful Jews he did indeed recommend humility and mercy to the point of non-resistance, but in the Temple cleansing He set an example of resistance to evil in the cause of *Right* which we cannot disregard.

When the Passover feast was over, Jesus left Jerusalem and returned toward Galilee through the province of Samaria. The Samaritans had once been idolators, worshiping five gods, and

³ John ii, 19-21.

even now were not firm in the orthodox faith of the Jews. Their vacillating nature brought down upon them the contempt and enmity of the orthodox Jews, and the latter in traveling through Palestine generally avoided Samaria. But Jesus, never avoiding but ever seeking out sinners, passed through the country.

As He and His disciples pursued their way, they drew near to the Samaritan city of Sychar, and while the disciples entered the town to buy food, Jesus, weary from the journey, rested beside the well known as Jacob's Well, and sat on the stone curb of it. While He sat there a Samaritan woman, who was a sinner, came to the well to draw water, and Jesus asked her for a drink. The woman, seeing that He was a stranger, asked Him how He, a Jew, could ask a drink from her, a Samaritan. "For," she said, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

Jesus said that if she knew who in reality He was, she would ask Him for "living water"—for He wanted to teach and help her. But she, not understanding, replied, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and it is a deep well; where do you get your living water?"

Jesus told her that by the "living water" He meant the water of everlasting life. But still, as He seemed to her only a thirsty traveler resting by the well, she did not understand. Then

Jesus showed her, by telling her facts in her life, that He knew she was a sinner, and He taught her further, rebuking her people for their ignorance in having worshiped several gods, and saying, "God is Spirit: and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in reality." The woman was surprised by these words. Who was this Man who thus spoke to her of God with authority? And how could He know that she was a sinful woman who had had no real husband, when He said, "You have had five husbands; and he whom you have now espoused is not your husband?" She did not know that He spoke perhaps of the five religions of her people.

So she said, "I know Messiah [Christ] is coming. When he arrives, he will explain it all to us"—as if she would have said, "It is not for you, merely a weary traveler as you are, to presume to tell me such things." Then followed that great declaration, here made most fully and clearly for the first time:

" 'I am Messiah,' said Jesus, 'I who am talking to you'."

In spite of her skepticism the woman had already been impressed by His words and His manner of saying them, and by His knowledge of her life of sin, for when this solemn announcement reached her ears, she ran off quickly to the

city, leaving her water-pot forgotten, and told the men what surprising adventure had befallen her. "Come here, look at a man," she cried, "who has told me everything I ever did! Can he be the Christ?" So the Samaritans came out from their city to see Jesus, and He taught them.

Meanwhile the disciples returned with the food they had bought, but He would not eat, saying, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work," for He would not interrupt His instruction of the Samaritans who were crowding around Him. Hearing His words many of these people now believed that He was indeed the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and they begged Him to remain with them, so He stayed two days, teaching and preaching. Then He continued His journey back to Galilee.⁴

St. John refers to the surprise of the disciples when, returning to the well-side, they saw Jesus talking to a woman, for the Jews had peculiar notions regarding women. No Rabbi—the Jewish teacher of the law—was allowed to talk to a woman in public, even with his own wife. But Jesus always behaved to women as to men: He made no distinction between them.

Thus you see that Jesus' birth was first foretold to poor and humble shepherds, and His first

⁴ John iv, 3-43.

distinct and literal statement and revelation that He was the Messiah Himself was made to a poor Samaritan woman who was also a sinner. For, as we are so often told, He came in humility and benignity, not to judge the world, not to judge sinners, but to help and save them.

CHAPTER XIII

JESUS RAISES THE DEAD

One day Jesus and His disciples, and the multitude of people who had begun to follow Him about from place to place, went to a town called Nain, which is not far from Nazareth.

As they approached the town they met a funeral procession coming out of the gate. It was the funeral of the only son of a widow, and the poor mother followed after her dead child, weeping piteously. When Jesus saw her grief, He "felt pity for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'" We can imagine how she must have raised her head in surprise at hearing that beautiful, consoling voice in a situation which was without hope. But Jesus went to the bier where the young man lay dead, and placed His hand upon it, and the bearers stopped, probably shocked that anyone should interrupt the progress of a funeral. How must all of them have been startled and awed when they heard Jesus say, "Young man, I bid you rise."

What a terrible moment of suspense and fear must have followed those astounding words!

And how their hearts must have beat, and their hands and limbs trembled when he that was dead "sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother."

"All were seized with awe and glorified God. 'A great prophet has appeared among us,' they said, 'God has visited his people.' " There must have been first a great fear, in heavy silence, when they saw the dead arise; and after that pause of speechless awe they burst out into praise of God.¹

The news of this thrilling event reached the ears of John the Baptist in his fortress-prison at Machærus. Now the ruler Herod Antipas, who had imprisoned John, allowed his disciples to visit him in the prison. So John sent two of them to Jesus with this message, "Are you the Coming One? Or are we to look out for someone else?"

Jesus' reply to this was to show John's disciples many wonderful works of healing. Then He sent them back to John, saying, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard."²

Jesus was now followed by such multitudes, and they crowded so eagerly around Him, that they did not leave Him space enough in which to preach to them. Sometimes on the shore of the Sea of Galilee He was obliged to seek refuge in

¹ Luke vii, 11-16.

² Luke vii, 17-22.

a boat from which, when it was pushed off from the shore, He could speak to the people. Once when He was very weary He entered a ship with His disciples to cross over to the eastern side, seeking solitude and time for prayer in that more lonely region. He was so weary that He fell asleep, and while He slept a storm broke over them, the waves rose so high that they dashed over the ship, and His disciples were afraid. So they awoke Jesus, and begged Him to save them.

Jesus said, "Why are you afraid? How little you trust God!" Then He got up and checked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm." And His disciples were amazed.³

When they reached the eastern shore of the sea they passed by certain tombs of the dead, and out from among these tombs came two living beings "possessed with dæmons," and very wild and fierce. We must remember that there were no asylums or hospitals in those days for the shelter of lunatics or even ordinary sick people, and these poor creatures had been living among the tombs, alone in their terrible mental and physical misery.

Some distance away there was a large herd of swine, and the "dæmons" who possessed these poor men cried out to Jesus, if He drove them out to let them enter the bodies of the swine.

³ Matt. viii, 23-27.

“And he said unto them, ‘Begone!’” So the dæmons entered the herd of swine, “and the entire drove rushed down the steep slope into the sea and perished in the water.”⁴

The swineherds, much frightened, ran into the city and told the tale everywhere, and the stupid Gadarenes or Gerasenes—for it was their country—came out in great crowds to ask Jesus to go away and leave them. We do not know whether it was their fear of Him, which the miracle had aroused, or whether they were merely angry at the loss of their swine, which seemed to them more important than the miraculous cure of the two men. But they will always be remembered as the people who asked the Savior of the world to depart from their coast.

Jesus, therefore, having had none of the repose which He sought, entered again into a ship and returned to Capharnahum; and no sooner had He arrived there than the people came thronging to Him with their sick to be healed.

They were so eager for His help that one day, when He sat in Peter’s house—having no house of His own, nor “any place to lay His head”—the crowd being dense within the house and without, there came four men bringing a poor paralyzed man on a mat. But when they saw that it was impossible to get near to Jesus by reason of

⁴ Matt. viii, 28–34.

the crowd, they carried the mat to the low roof, made an opening in it, and lowered the man down through the hole into the room where Jesus was. And when Jesus saw what great faith they had in His compassion and power, He said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Now there were certain Scribes standing there, and when they heard these words of Jesus they considered them blasphemous. "Who can forgive sins," they thought to themselves, "but God only?" And Jesus read their thoughts and perceived their unbelief. So He rebuked them for their petty reasoning about the letter of things and their blindness to the spirit of things. What difference did it make, He asked them, whether He said, "Your sins are forgiven," or "Rise, lift your pallet and go away?" But to show them that His power was sufficient to forgive sins or do what He would, He said to the paralytic, "Rise, I tell you, lift your pallet, and go home."

Then the helpless man rose up, lifted up his mat and walked out amid the general wonder. St. Mark tells us that all who were present glorified God, and said to one another, "We never saw the like of it!" ⁵

⁵ Mark ii, 3-12.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

Who were these Scribes and Pharisees who followed Jesus from place to place, to listen to Him, and to trap Him in something which they might consider blasphemy, and by means of which they could accuse Him before the people and destroy their faith in Him? For they were themselves teachers of the people, and they grew more and more jealous as they saw Jesus' power and influence increase day by day.

The Scribes were those Jews who were learned in the religious law, and the religious law with the Jews was also the civil law. Everything was regulated by "the law," and as the people were constantly taught the law, even every serving man or maid was familiar with its principal rules and precepts. The duty of the Scribes was to copy and correct the law, and read and explain it to the people. So when Jesus came and preached a law quite different, a much higher and more spiritual law, these Scribes were disturbed and angry. Jesus, in their opinion, was intruding upon their own ground. They fol-

lowed Him about, therefore, to entrap Him by some subtle question, and if possible they hoped to humiliate Him some day before the people.

The Pharisees were a Jewish sect almost wholly given over to the innumerable outward observances of their religion, and paying but little heed to the real inner spirit of truth and morality. They were consequently hypocrites, for they seemed better than they were, and so the word Pharisee means to this day a kind of hypocrite, one who makes a show of religion without really being good. They, too, followed Jesus about, hoping to annoy and trouble Him in His teaching, and thus prove to the people that He was not the Messiah. For it was impossible for these Scribes and Pharisees—almost without exception—to believe in a Messiah whose teaching was in so many respects quite different from orthodox Jewish belief, who had been humbly born in Nazareth of Galilee, who was the son of a carpenter, as they thought, and Himself a carpenter likewise, a Messiah who was poor and lowly, who ate the cheapest, simplest food, who had no house, who had no clothes save those he wore. No. Their idea of the Messiah was of a king, rich, proud, powerful. Jesus they could not and would not accept.

But Jesus accepted all who believed in Him. The worst sinners, did they appeal to Him in

any way for help, were more welcome than those who were already good, for they had a more urgent need of Him. He said often that He had come to save the weak and the sinful, and none were too poor, too obscure, too wicked to be loved by Him if they desired to reach Him. He was truly the incarnation of perfect sympathy. He joined in the innocent happiness of the people, as well as in their sorrows. And because He sometimes shared in their sober feasting, the Scribes and Pharisees bitterly criticized Him. To their unreasonableness He replied, "For John [the Baptist] has come neither eating nor drinking, and men say, 'He has a devil;' the Son of man has come eating and drinking, and men say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners.' Nevertheless, Wisdom is vindicated by all that she does."

It is in this same chapter that St. Matthew records for us that beautiful promise of Jesus which has comforted so many sad and weary human beings: "Come unto me, all who are labouring and burdened, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find your souls refreshed; my yoke is kindly and my burden light."¹

It was about this time that Jesus and His dis-

¹ Matt. xi, 18-19; 28-30.

ciples passed on a Sabbath day through a corn-field, and as the disciples were hungry they picked some ears of the corn and ate them. (This was in reality wheat, not the Indian corn, and the wheat of Capharnahum is celebrated for its excellence in the Talmud, the twelve great folio books of Jewish law and tradition.)

Now one of the strictest rules of the Jewish religion was the observance of the Sabbath, which was Saturday. Their rules regarding this had grown more and more severe until they had become absurd, and a great deal of valuable time, which might have been devoted to deeds of practical charity, was wasted because of these empty and soulless formalities and prohibitions. So when the Pharisees saw the hungry disciples actually daring to pluck the corn on the Sabbath day, which was not permitted by the law, they at once said to Jesus, There! See what your followers are doing. They are behaving unlawfully on the Sabbath!

Jesus reminded them of certain things in their own history: how David had eaten the holy bread when he was hungry, and how the priests of the Temple were permitted in certain ways to break the rules of the Sabbath, and He said, "I tell you, One is here who is greater than the temple." And He rebuked them for their lack of mercy and kindness. Then He left them and went

away and entered the synagogue. But they followed after Him, angry and sullen.²

In the synagogue was a man whose hand was withered; and as soon as the Pharisees saw that Jesus desired to heal him, they asked, "Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?" hoping to accuse Him of breaking the law. But Jesus ignored their wicked intentions, and said to them, "Is there a man of you with one sheep, who will not catch hold of it and lift it out of a pit on the Sabbath, if it falls in? And how much more is a man worth than a sheep? Thus it is right to do a kindness on the Sabbath." Then He commanded the man to stretch forth his hand, and He healed it. The angry Pharisees left the synagogue, and began to consult among themselves and with the Herodians, the followers of Herod, as to how they could overthrow Jesus. For His words and deeds, all proceeding from His deep love and His constant effort to show forth the love of God, defeated and discomfited them again and again. But when Jesus saw that they were plotting against Him, He departed, for it was not yet the time for His death, for the end of His work on earth.

Soon afterwards a man, not only possessed of a dæmon but also dumb and blind, was brought to Him to be healed. And the stricken man

² Matt. xii, 1-10.

spoke and saw, and every beholder was astounded. But when the Pharisees heard of this miracle, they said, "This fellow only casts out dæmons by Beelzebub the prince of dæmons."

Upon this, Jesus first reasoned with them, but their minds were closed against Him. Then He accused them of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, the most awful sin, which could never be forgiven. And He said, "You brood of vipers, how can you speak good when you are evil? For the mouth utters what the heart is full of." But they persisted, and said that He would have to give them some sign, something to prove that He was Messiah. And He told them there would be no sign given them but His resurrection from the dead after three days. But they did not believe Him, and continued to hate and oppress Him.³

It was shortly before this that Jesus had seen a man "sitting at the receipt of custom," a publican or tax-gatherer. As taxes were levied on the Jews by their hated conquerors, the Romans, and as the collectors often robbed the people, taking from them more than the law required, they were hated by them, and we see the phrase "publicans and sinners" constantly used in the Gospels. But when Jesus saw this man, He said to him simply, "Follow me," and the man left the

³ Matt. xii, 34-40.

work which was his daily employment and livelihood, and immediately followed Him. This man was Matthew, the apostle who many years later became the first biographer of Jesus.

So Jesus went and sat at a meal in Matthew's house with His disciples; and many "tax-gatherers and sinners," who were friends of Matthew's, came and joined them, and this gave fresh offense to the quibbling Pharisees, who said to the disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with tax-gatherers and sinners?" Jesus did not leave the reply to His disciples, whose slow minds would probably have been puzzled about what to answer. He spoke Himself: "Those who are strong have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill: I have not come to call just men but sinners." But the obstinacy of the Scribes and Pharisees continued, and, as St. Mark says, Jesus looked at them "in anger and vexation at their obstinacy."

CHAPTER XV

JESUS PERFORMS OTHER MIRACLES

When the meal was over, and Jesus was still teaching those who questioned Him, a man came hurriedly, and in great grief, to speak to Jesus. He was Jairus, a "president of the synagogue," that is, chief elder of the congregation, a man of influence and authority. But he believed in Jesus' power to heal, and he fell at His feet and implored Him to come to his house and save his little daughter, twelve years old, who lay at the point of death. "Do come and lay your hands on her, that she may recover and live."

So Jesus arose and went with Jairus, and a large crowd followed them in order to see what Jesus would do. But while they were on the way, a poor woman, sick of a malady which had been incurable for many long years, forced her way among the people until she came near to Jesus, and with perfect faith she touched Him, believing that merely the touch of His garments would restore her health. And no sooner was her hand laid upon His robe, than she knew that she was once more sound and well. Jesus also

knew that someone had touched Him with yearning and faith, and though the crowd was dense He would not lose trace of one poor sinner who had need of Him. So He stopped, and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

The well-meaning, but at that time often ignorant, disciples thought it strange that Jesus should ask such a question when many people were constantly touching Him as they thronged through the street. But Jesus "kept looking round to see who had done it." Then the woman was frightened lest she had been too presumptuous, and she "fell down before him, telling him all the truth. He said to her 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be free from your complaint.'"

While He was speaking to the grateful and happy woman, messengers came from Jairus' house to give the poor father the heartrending news that his daughter had died, and they said there was no more need to trouble Jesus about it. The child was dead, and there was nothing to be done but to grieve. But Jesus heard them, and He said to the grief-stricken father, "Have no fear, only believe."

So taking with Him none but His disciples Peter, James and John, He went to the house of Jairus. There everybody, the family and the neighbors, were loudly weeping and wailing, ac-

according to the custom of the time, and all the house was in a tumult. But Jesus spoke calmly to them, "Why make a noise and wail? The child is not dead, but asleep." They laughed at Him scornfully. Could He tell them the child was living, when they saw her, with their own eyes, dead? But Jesus turned away all these people, with their unseemly clamor, and taking only His three disciples and the child's weeping father and mother, He went into her room. And in the room there was a deep silence, the child lying white and motionless before them, and the mother's and father's tears flowing faster at the sight. But Jesus gently approached, and took the girl by her little cold hand, and said to her "'Talitha Koum'—which may be translated, 'Little girl, I am telling you to rise.'" And the little girl sat up, and left her couch, and walked. As she could not then know or realize the miracle which had been performed upon her, nor who it was had done it, perhaps it was natural that she should go first to her mother, whose loving arms must have been already opened to receive her. And Jesus, looking at them, spoke words most beautiful in their tender pity and care, their perfect understanding of human weakness,—He "told them to give her something to eat."¹

Now one of the Pharisees named Simon, whom

¹ Mark v, 22-43.

Jesus had rebuked, asked Him to come to his house and take a meal with him. Jesus knew that the man only invited Him that He might examine His words more minutely and entrap Him, and that his hospitality was only a mockery. But He entered the house and ate with the Pharisee. While they sat at table, a soft sound of weeping came to Jesus' compassionate ears. It was a woman who wept, a sinful woman, who knowing that Jesus was within had entered the house, and now, seeking His forgiveness and help, had knelt down behind Him, weeping. Her tears fell on His feet, and she wiped them with her long, beautiful hair, and anointed them with the costly alabaster box of ointment which she had brought for the purpose. She is said to been the woman Mary, of the village of Magdala, called Mary Magdalene.

When the Pharisee who was Jesus' host saw this, he began to think, If this man were what he claims to be, if he were really a prophet, he would know that this woman is a sinner, and he would not suffer her to soil him with her touch. For this was the Pharisaical way of thinking. How different from the heart and mind of Jesus! Jesus read the Pharisee's thoughts and said, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

The man replied, "Speak, Teacher." Then Jesus told him this parable: "There was a money-

lender who had two debtors; one owed him fifty pounds, the other five. As they were unable to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me, now, which of them will love him most?" Simon thought a moment and replied that he supposed the man would love most who had been forgiven the larger debt. Jesus told Simon that he was right. Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "'You see this woman? When I came into your house, you never gave me water for my feet, while she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair; you never gave me a kiss, while ever since she came in she has kept pressing kisses on my feet; you never anointed my head with oil, while she has anointed my feet with perfume. Therefore I tell you, many as her sins are, they are forgiven, for her love is great; whereas he to whom little is forgiven has but little love.' And he said to her 'Your sins are forgiven.'"

We can fancy how the woman rose up with a tear-stained but radiant face, knowing that she could begin her life anew in faith and hope. But the Pharisee and his friends only said to themselves, "Who is this, to forgive even sins?" Jesus saw that their eyes were blind and their hearts hard. But he only said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."²

² Luke vii, 36-50.

Again, when Jesus was once in Jerusalem, He was walking by the sheep-market and passed a certain sheep-pool which lies there, called the Pool of Bethzatha.

It was a strange sight, this pool, for in the porticoes around it lay many sick people—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed—waiting for the water of the pool to be troubled. For we are told that the water of the pool was at times agitated by natural gases, and it was supposed that this spring had curative properties, as such springs often have. But the people had a tradition that an angel came at intervals, and troubled the water, which then cured their maladies.³

As Jesus passed the pool He perceived lying near it a paralyzed man who had been in that terrible condition for thirty-eight years. For thirty-eight years he had suffered, and still he hoped to be cured, still he crawled to the pool which might some day heal him. Jesus paused beside this pitiful wrecked being, and said, "Do you want your health restored?"

"Sir," said the cripple, "I have nobody to put me into the bath, when the water is disturbed; and while I am getting down myself, someone else gets in before me."

With no waste of words, Jesus said, "'Get up,

³ Farrar's "Life of Christ," Notes, pp. 282-283.

lift your mat and walk.' And instantly the man got well, lifted his mat and started to walk."

Then Jesus went away immediately, to avoid the excitement and pressure of the crowd upon Him when they should realize what miracle He had done.

But it was the Sabbath day. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "This is the Sabbath, you have no right to be carrying your mat." For their petty rules regarding the Sabbath were worth more in their eyes than the mighty work that had been done, or the happiness of the healed man. The poor man said, wondering, "But the man who healed me, he told me, 'Lift your mat and walk.' "

And though he also was a Jew and knew the Sabbath-day rules, could he have refused to obey One who had miraculously healed him? Who was this man who cured you? the finical Jews asked him. But the man did not know. He only knew he had been cured, that he who had been impotent for thirty-eight years now walked like other men, and that He who had healed him had disappeared.

But Jesus evidently intended to see the man once more, to enlighten him. So, finding him in the Temple, where he had probably gone to give thanks to God for his recovery, Jesus said to him, "See, you are well and strong; commit no

more sins in case something worse befalls you.”⁴ And the man went and told the Jews who it was that had cured him, not knowing that by so doing he was endangering Jesus’ life, for the Jews began to plot against Him to kill Him for His deeds and His words. Thus Jesus was obliged to leave Jerusalem in order to preserve His life for the completion of the work which yet remained for Him to do.

⁴ John v, 2-17.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

At this time Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, leaving John the Baptist to pine in his dark prison at Machærus, was giving magnificent entertainments in his palace near by. Herod led a life of the most extreme luxury. His palaces were adorned with furniture of solid metal, with candelabra and lamps of the precious Corinthian brass, with tables of marble and porphyry. The halls "glistened with inlaid stones," and pillars carved from a single block of stone supported the ceilings. There were numberless apartments and costly baths. Feasting, music and dancing filled Herod's hours of leisure, and in the intervals he committed many deeds of cruelty, as his father had done before him.

Herod Antipas had now reigned for many years, and to celebrate his birthday he had resolved to give a great feast to the courtiers and officials of his palace, and to the men of note living in the neighborhood. At this feast, his wife's daughter, Salome, who had accompanied her mother when she married Herod, danced for

the amusement of him and his guests, already half intoxicated with the wine they had drunk.

Salome was a graceful young girl, and her dancing gave such pleasure to the company that Herod declared he would give her anything she desired, even to the half of his kingdom—which, as his kingdom belonged to the Roman emperor and not to himself, he might have found some difficulty in doing. Salome consulted her mother as to what gift she should ask of Herod—perhaps she thought of royal jewels for her own adornment—but it is not altogether surprising that a woman so wicked and murderous as Herodias should tell her daughter to ask Herod for the head of John the Baptist, who had declared her marriage sinful, had openly preached and incited the people against her and her husband, and whose existence was always a constant menace to them.

When Herod heard this request he was much troubled, for in his heart was a fear of John because of his goodness and his power over the people, and he is said to have been slightly influenced by some of John's teaching. But he had given his word to Salome, and would not be put to shame before his guests, so—weak and abominable as he was—he commanded that John should be sought out in his dreary prison and his head struck off, and that it should be brought there to

the palace, in the midst of the gayety and the music, and presented to Salome in accordance with her—or rather her mother's—wish.¹ A horrible scene, but not more so than others which occurred at that period, recorded in histories of the time.

When John's disciples heard of this atrocious murder, they sadly came and took the body of their beloved leader, and buried him on Mount Attarus. Thus ended the life of that great man and Messenger of God. As for Herod, he left Machærus after his terrible deed against him whom he knew to be wise and virtuous, and went to his palace at Tiberias. There, when he heard of the miracles of Jesus, he thought that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and he was filled with superstitious fear.

Meanwhile, Jesus heard of the death of John of whom He had said, "I tell you, among the sons of women there is none greater than John."² Then, seeing that John was dead, Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, whom he had named apostles, and commanded them to preach as they went, "tell men 'The Reign of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out dæmons," and gave them the power to do this. And He told them to take nothing with them but

¹ Matt. xiv, 3-11.

² Luke vii, 28.

the clothes which they wore, and to depend upon the people whom they healed and to whom they preached, for their subsistence. So they went forth and preached and cured the sick everywhere.

When they returned from their work, they told Jesus "all that they had done," and He took them apart into a desert region near the Sea of Galilee, that they might rest and talk together. But here the people followed Him, as they always did, asking Him to talk to them and to heal them. And Jesus was sorry for them, for they seemed to him like "sheep without a shepherd"; so He put aside His own will, as He was continually doing, and helped them.

When evening drew near the apostles began to be troubled concerning the people, and where they should get food so far from the city, for there were about five thousand men there. So they advised their Master to send them away before the darkness fell.

But Jesus said calmly, "Give them some food yourselves," and the apostles were astonished at Him. "We have only got five loaves and two fish," they said, perhaps with the slight impatience which their matter-of-fact minds sometimes showed when they failed to understand their Lord.

"Make them lie down in rows of about fifty,"

Jesus said. So the wondering apostles told the people to lie down, and they did so, not knowing what was to happen.

"Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, broke them in pieces and handed them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and had enough. What they had left over was picked up, twelve baskets full of fragments."³ This miracle is one of the few which are recorded in all the four Gospels.

Why should we have any difficulty in believing this miracle, as some have, when the incomprehensible wonders of nature are all around us—those wonders which no power of the best of our human intellects can truly explain? Who can unravel the secret of the growing seed, which becomes a regal flower? Who can analyze the process by which a mustard seed, one of the smallest of them all, lying in the brown earth, awakes to luxuriant life and becomes—in eastern climates—a tree, shooting out "great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it," and to which Jesus compared the growth of the Kingdom of God, just as we indeed have seen it grow through these nearly two thousand years?

Some say, but those wonders follow natural

³ Luke ix, 12-17.

laws. Well, who made the natural laws? God. Then if God's desire is to alter for His own purpose those laws, who can say He has not the power to alter what He has Himself made? And if He have the power to make the grain grow and ripen from which the bread is made, shall He not have the power to *make the bread grow* if so He wills? This is indeed "supernatural," or above nature, but is not He who made nature, supernatural?

Some say they could believe if they could see with their own eyes. But we have to remember that many who then saw with their own eyes did not even then believe. In the eleventh chapter of Matthew Christ rebukes the cities of Khorazin, Bethsaida and His own Capharnahum for their obstinate unbelief. "Woe to thee, Khorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida! Had the miracles performed in you been performed in Tyre and Sidon" [non-Jewish, Phœnician cities] "they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." And then Jesus said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding all this from the wise and learned and revealing it to the simple-minded," that is, minds that are artless, ingenuous and unspoiled. The "wise and learned," the proud and intellectual, sophisticated, egotistically cautious people could not accept that which was taken into the humble and open minds of the

young in spirit. Yet no philosophy conceived by the greatest intellect can disprove these mysteries, which Faith accepts with humility, knowing its own ignorance.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS

It was soon after this that Jesus told the apostles of the fate which He was to undergo. But He commanded them to tell no man, for He must fulfill His work, He must suffer, must be rejected by the elders and Scribes, He must be slain, and must be raised from the dead on the third day. This tragical and glorious fate was His mission on earth—it was only thus, by giving Himself up like a lamb at the sacrifice, that He could show all the world what His words and His teaching meant. But Peter, loving Jesus with a true, if ignorant, warmth of heart, protested against His words, cried out that He must not be slain. “‘God forbid, Lord,’ he said, ‘This must not be.’”¹ But Jesus reproved him, and said, “Get behind me, you Satan”—that is, go from me, you who would tempt me from my duty, and lead me to think of my own comfort and safety. “You are a hindrance to me! Your outlook is not God’s but man’s.” And He added,

¹ Matt. xvi, 22.

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and so follow me."²

About eight days after this, as St. Luke tells us, Jesus "took Peter, John and James, and went up the hillside to pray." Scholars explain that this "hillside" was probably Mount Hermon, known as the "holy" mountain. On the northern limit of Galilee it lifts its snow-covered head, with its "bare and jagged crest," to a height of eleven thousand feet. Below this crest there are dense forests of oak, below that a rocky region, and still lower, near its base, stretches a green meadow land.

Up into this great and lonely mountain at the close of day Jesus had led the three apostles whom He had chosen to be witnesses of a wonderful thing, a sign from Heaven which was to prepare Jesus for His future martyrdom. They were all weary, and the apostles yielded to the heaviness which overcame them, and lying on the ground with their cloaks wrapped around them, as was their custom, and also the custom of their Master, they fell asleep in the dusk and silence, while Jesus prayed.

But suddenly, out of their heavy slumber, they were awakened by a strange and dazzling light. With their eyes half blinded in this great radiance, they sat up, fully awakened by the sight

² Matt. xvi, 23-24.

before them. They saw Jesus still praying, but as he prayed "the appearance of his face altered, and his dress turned dazzling white."³ What must have been their amazement and terror to see two forms, radiant in this supernatural light, standing with Jesus—the prophets Moses and Elias, who spoke with Him of His coming death. We can imagine how Peter and John and James must have crouched down in awe upon the earth at this transfiguration of One with whom they lived daily, and who had hitherto appeared outwardly a man like themselves. They remained speechless and trembling while the glorious vision lasted, but as it faded, as the forms of the heavenly visitants departed, and the bright light died away, Peter sprang up impulsively and asked Jesus that they might remain always in this holy spot, and build three tabernacles, one for Him, one for Moses and one for Elijah, "not knowing what he was saying," as St. Luke explains, for he was overwrought by excitement. But even as Peter impetuously spoke, a cloud of light came over them, and the apostles were filled with fear. "But a voice came from the cloud, 'This is my Son, my Chosen one, listen to him.'"⁴ Then they fell in terror, face downward to the earth, and lay still. "When the voice ceased,

³ Luke ix, 29.

⁴ Luke ix, 34-35.

they found themselves alone with Jesus." Only the darkness round them now, and the deep silence of the night, and above the shining stars. But still the apostles feared to move. Overawed by this heavenly visitation, they lay prostrate and motionless on the earth. "But Jesus came forward and touched them, saying, 'Rise, have no fear.' " ⁵

It seems that this event may have filled the hearts of the disciples with pride, and their minds with thoughts of rank and power, for if their Master had such heavenly association with the great prophets Moses and Elijah, should not they, His faithful chosen followers, also have great future glory? For they could not as yet realize either the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the lesson of humility which He constantly taught them. So "a dispute arose among them, as to which of them was the greatest." ⁶ Then St. Matthew in his eighteenth chapter tells us that afterwards, when they had descended from the mountain, Jesus "called a child, and set it among them." And He told them that, so far from reigning proudly in the Kingdom of Heaven, they would have to become as humble as this little child before they could even enter.

⁵ Matt. xvii, 7-8.

⁶ Luke ix, 46.

"Whosoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Realm of heaven."

How strange these words must have sounded in their ears!

Then Jesus went on to speak of those who humble themselves and become as little children, those who believe. And He said, "But whoever is a hindrance to one of these little ones, who believe in me, better for him to have a great millstone hung round his neck and be sunk in the deep sea."

Once, too, when some little children were brought to Him to receive His blessing, the disciples rebuked the parents for disturbing Jesus; but He spoke those beautiful words which can never be forgotten, "Let the children alone, do not stop them from coming to me: the Realm of heaven belongs to such as these. Then he laid his hands on them and went upon his way."⁷

So He taught them not only humility in themselves but to have respect for humility in others. From this lesson He passed to another. He showed them that even the sinful, whom they might despise, were as valuable to God as the virtuous, nay, even more the object of His concern. And to illustrate this He told them the beautiful parable of the lost sheep, which the shepherd seeks and seeks in the lonely mountain,

⁷ Matt. xix, 13-15.

and when he finds it is happier than he was over the sheep which had not strayed away at all. Then, having shown them how God seeks the lost sheep, the sinful ones, to save and forgive them, He taught them that they too must forgive one another. Peter then asked Him, “‘Lord, how often is my brother to sin against me and be forgiven? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Seven times? I say, seventy times seven!’” And to make this still more clear to them, He told them the story of the king and his wicked servant, which is recorded in St. Matthew’s eighteenth chapter. Thus He taught them to be humble, not to judge one another, and to forgive; and you will see with what divine perfection He Himself followed these precepts when the time came for Him, the loving and merciful, to suffer at the hands of unloving and unmerciful men, and to die.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Another parable which Jesus told to the people—St. Luke says to the tax-gatherers and sinners, to teach them God's mercy and forgiveness and love—was the story of the prodigal son.

There was a certain man who had prospered in life. He had land, and cattle and money and many servants; but, above all that, he had two sons whom he dearly loved. The elder of these sons was steady and quiet, and faithful in the service of his father, in whose business he was employed. He seemed to be a good and virtuous young man.

The younger son was of a different disposition. He was restless, and had a strong desire to leave his father's home and to taste liberty and independence, and see what things he might see in the great broad world of which he was always dreaming. So finally, when this restlessness and wish for travel became too strong for him to resist, he went to his father and begged him to give him at once his inheritance, that he might go and travel and see the world. The father was sad

at the thought of his child's leaving him, but, being of a kind and indulgent nature, he gave him his share of money, advising him to be prudent and careful, and let him go, with his blessing.

So the younger son took all his money and whatever was needful for his journey, and went gayly away to see the world. And he traveled many days until he reached a country which pleased him, and there he decided to remain and enjoy his life. He began to live in a riotous and sinful manner, his companions were wicked people, and he forgot the parting words of his father, and his father's goodness to him, and thought only of amusing himself by day and by night. Thus he continued until one day he found, to his consternation, that he had spent all his money, and was only a poor young man in a strange land. It is probable that he asked help of the companions with whom he had dissipated his money and his time, but they had no respect or pity for him, and he was left desolate.

About the same time, there was a famine in that country, and he was obliged to seek any work, even the lowest, which would supply him with daily bread. So he went to a man who had land and beasts, and asked for work. The only work the man could give him was to feed the swine in the fields, but the young man's pride

was now so reduced by hunger and shame that he accepted the employment, and went to the field and fed the swine. And he was so weakened by hunger that he envied the swine the coarse food, the husks, which he gave them, and would have been glad to eat it himself.

Then he began to see the folly of his actions. Sitting alone in the field with the swine, wretched and humiliated and disillusioned, he thought with bitter tears of the kind father and comfortable home he had left, and he said to himself that he, the son of his father, was not even as decently fed and clad as his father's humblest servants. And his pride rose within him; but as it rose it was overcome by his shame and humiliation, and his consciousness of sin; and as he thought of his good father his heart grew humble and melted within him, and he sprang suddenly to his feet among the swine and exclaimed, I will go home to my father! He was always good and loving—he even let me go away against his own wishes. Oh, surely he will not be unkind to me, but he will let me be one of his servants, that is all I shall ask of him, for I am not worthy any longer to be his son. And his head dropped down with shame on his bosom.

Now in the meantime, his father had grieved many days for the son who was gone from him, and for whom he had a great tenderness. But he

heard no word from him, and his heart was heavy; for though he loved his elder son too, yet he yearned for the younger one who was lost, and perhaps dead. When the rain fell he thought of him, wondering if he were in shelter, and when the storm came he wished his wandering son safe by the warm hearthside. But no word of him came.

One day the father stood looking down the road that led far off into the world, the road along which his willful son had left him, when he saw approaching him, slowly and timidly, a young man clad in ragged garments, with hollow cheeks and eyes downcast, as if he dared not lift them and look into anybody's face. But as the father gazed attentively at this stranger, he gave a loud cry and ran forward and embraced and kissed the poor wanderer. For it was his son.

Then the young man wept, and told his father of his sin and his repentance, and asked to be his servant, for he knew that he was not worthy any more to be his son. All that glory and happiness which he used to have, he knew now that he had not appreciated, and had only thrown it away.

But the father embraced his son again, weeping with joy and relief; and paying no heed to the young man's pitiful, stammering words, he called to the servants to bring a beautiful robe for him to wear, and a fine ring for his hand, and

shoes, and all that he needed and that the house afforded; and then he commanded them to bring the calf that had been fattening for the household repast, and to kill and roast it and make a feast for his starving child. For, he said, joyfully, I thought my son dead, but see! he is alive!

Meanwhile the elder son was out in the field, attending to his labor, and when he had finished he came near to the house, and was surprised to hear the sounds of music and dancing and merriment. So he asked one of the servants the meaning of this uproar, for he could not understand it. The servant explained to him that his lost brother had come home in a sad condition, and that his father had ordered the fatted calf to be killed to feast him, in thanksgiving that he was once more safe home.

Then the elder brother, instead of rejoicing at his brother's return, was angry, and he would not even enter the house, but remained outside, resentful and sullen. So when the servants told the happy father that his elder son was angry and would not enter the house, he went out in amazement to see what was the matter.

And the selfish son rebuked his father and said bitterly, I have worked honestly for you for many years, and obeyed you and done my duty, but you have never killed a fatted calf for me, nor ever given me even a kid to feast my friends.

But as soon as my brother comes, after spending all his money in sin and evil living, you make a feast for him at once, and kill a fatted calf for him!

The father was deeply hurt, and looked reproachfully at his son. You are always here with me, he said, and you know well that all that I have is yours. At any time you could make a feast if you so desired. But, don't you see? your erring brother has come! He is here once more, safe at home. It was but right that we should rejoice over his return and celebrate it. And then, his voice thrilling with joy, he said, Your brother that we thought dead is living; he was lost to us, and lo, he is found!

Then he returned to his repentant son, and the words were like a song in his heart, "And was lost, and is found, and was lost, and is found."

So Jesus told the people the story of this good and compassionate human father as a type of our Father in Heaven.

CHAPTER XIX

JESUS FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND

We have already heard how Jesus sometimes needed to be alone, that He might pray and renew His strength in silence and peace. He felt this need on the day when He fed the immense crowd of people with five loaves and two fish. So He commanded His disciples to take ship and cross the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida, near Capharnahum, on the opposite shore, and He Himself remained behind and sent away the people, after which He went up into a mountain to pray.

The evening came, and night drew on, but as it grew darker a contrary wind began to blow and seriously hindered the disciples in their rowing. They worked hard at the oars, but the wind blew against them and they made no progress. It grew darker and darker, and they were still far from land, when suddenly in the darkness they saw a form, as if of a man, walking upon the water, and thinking it a spirit they were afraid, and cried out. Then a voice, that Voice of such

strength and tenderness, came to them across the water, "Courage, it is I, have no fear."

And Jesus, for it was He, came into the boat among them. Then the wind grew calm; and the disciples were filled with wonder.¹

But no sooner had they landed in the plain of Gennesaret, than the people recognized Jesus, having seen or heard of His miracles of healing, and ran eagerly to bring their sick to be cured. As Jesus went through the little villages they laid their sick in the street, on the roadsides, anywhere, that they might only touch His garments, "and all who touched Him recovered." What a beautiful scene of love and beneficence that must have been!

But certain Scribes and Pharisees had come from Jerusalem to spy upon Jesus, as they were constantly doing, and one day, seeing some of the disciples eat bread without first washing their hands—thus breaking the Jewish law—they asked Jesus why His disciples did this. Jesus shamed them for their hypocrisy. He told them that they cared more for the washing of hands, or the "washing of cups and jugs" than they did for being good. Then He gathered the people all around Him—for He was ever mindful of each opportunity to instruct them, to show them the difference between seeming to be good and

¹ Mark vi, 45-51.

being good—and told them that nothing which enters a man can harm him spiritually, but what goes out of him. For that which enters into a man does not enter his heart, but that which goes out of him—his words, his deeds—comes out from his heart, and if that is evil, then is the man harmed. “It is what comes from him that defiles him.” He taught always that the form and ceremony of religion is not enough, but to do justice and mercy, and to love one another, that is to fulfill the law.

After this Jesus went northward into Phœnicia, to the country around Tyre and Sidon, populous and busy cities, celebrated for their excellent purple dye made from a peculiar shellfish—the Tyrian purple. In this country Jesus entered a house, and wanted to remain quietly there, but “he could not escape notice.” So there came a Greek woman, of the Syrophœnicians, whose daughter was ill, begging Him to heal her child and falling in supplication at His feet. But Jesus, perhaps to test her faith and her spirit (and, as Farrar suggests, to test the spirit of His disciples lest they be too narrowly Jewish), told her that He must heal first the people of His own land. “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs,” He said. And He spoke in this way because she belonged to a nation of idolaters. But though the poor woman

was ignorant, yet love and solicitude for her sick child, and the divine effect of Jesus' holy presence, filled her heart with humility, and she replied, "No, sir, but under the table the dogs do pick up the children's crumbs." Then Jesus said, "Well, go your way; the dæmon has left your daughter, since you have said that."

And when the woman reached her home, she found her daughter well.

Jesus now returned to the coast of the Sea of Galilee, and on His way the people brought Him a deaf and dumb man, beseeching Him to cure him. St. Mark tells us exactly what Jesus did in healing this man. First, He took him apart from the people, and when He was alone with him, He "put his fingers into the man's ears, touched his tongue with saliva, and looking up to heaven with a sigh he said to him, Ephphatha, (which means, Open). Then his ears were [at once] opened and his tongue freed from its fetter—he began to speak correctly." ²

Such deeds amazed the people, and they would not leave Jesus but followed Him everywhere, carrying their little baskets of food on their arms. One day Jesus saw that their scanty provisions were exhausted. They had indeed been following Him for three days, having now no means of replenishing their supplies; and Jesus told the

² Mark vii, 32-35.

disciples that He feared to send them away fasting, as many of them had come from long distances, and being without food might faint by the wayside. "How many loaves have you got?" He asked the disciples, and they answered "Seven." They had also "a few small fish." So Jesus commanded the people, of whom there were four thousand, to recline on the ground. Then taking the seven loaves He said grace over them, broke them and gave them to His disciples, and these gave the bread to the people. Then He blessed the fish, and commanded the disciples to give them also to the people. And these seven loaves and a few fishes were enough for the four thousand: "So the people ate and were satisfied, and they picked up seven baskets of fragments which were left over"—these same baskets which the people had been carrying on their arms as they eagerly followed in His footsteps.

Wonderful feeding of four thousand by seven loaves! But is it any more really wonderful than the fruitful increase of a field of grain? Does not the farmer plant a little sack of seed, and does not this sack of seed grow and increase and feed thousands of people? Are not all the works of God works of wonder, and is it not merely that those which we are accustomed to see we think little of, and those we are not accustomed to see we find it hard to believe in? For there is noth-

ing to which our curious human minds accustom themselves so readily as to those very marvels which cause us such skepticism and astonishment when they are novelties. The telegraph, the telephone, the motor car, the aëroplane, the radio-phone and all the wireless systems—how easily we grow used to them and come to regard them as commonplace. Are we not very much like the Scribes and Pharisees who saw His actual deeds, and yet constantly asked Him for some other “sign” that He was indeed the Christ? But He told them they should receive no other sign. Their hearts were hard with pride and egotism, and no sign would convince them. “But he sighed in spirit, and said, ‘Why does this generation demand a Sign? I tell you truly, No Sign shall be given this generation.’ ”³

After this, St. Mark tells us, He went to the towns around Cæsarea Philippi, and it was on this journey that Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do people say I am?”

After all that He had done, the miraculous cures, the other miracles, the divine words He had spoken—after all, the disciples could only tell Him that the people thought He was John the Baptist risen up again, or Elijah, or some other of the prophets. This was apparently all the re-

³ Mark viii, 12.

sult of His labor, earthly and divine. Then He asked them, sadly perhaps, "And who do you say I am? Peter replied 'You are the Christ.' " Thus Peter testified then, as the Church testifies now and everywhere.

About this time a man among the multitudes brought his son to Jesus, telling Him that the child could not speak, and that a "dumb spirit" possessed him so that he foamed at the mouth and gnashed with his teeth—a horrible malady enough. The man explained that he had asked the disciples to heal his child, and they could not. Jesus said then, "O faithless generation, how long must I still be with you? how long have I to bear with you? Bring him to me," and the father brought the child who, as soon as he came near, fell on the ground in a fit. The father, distressed at his son's suffering, cried out to Jesus, "If you can do anything, do help us, do have pity on us." Jesus, observing the man's doubt, replied, "'If you can!' Anything can be done for one who believes."

The wretched father began to weep, and being an honest man said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." I want to believe, O help me to believe!

Jesus then spoke to the son, rebuking the evil spirit that possessed him, and the boy became as if he were dead, and many thought him dead.

“But taking his hand, Jesus raised him and he got up.” ⁴

Afterwards, the disciple John told Jesus that they had seen a man healing people in His name, and they forbade him to do it because he was not one of them. But Jesus rebuked him. “Do not stop him,” He said; “no one who performs any miracle in my name will be ready to speak evil of me. He who is not against us is for us. Whoever gives you a cup of water because you belong to Christ, I tell you he shall not miss his reward.” Thus He warned them against narrowness and selfishness of spirit.

⁴ Mark ix, 27.

CHAPTER XX

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Jesus now preached to the people in the synagogue at Capharnahum, His own adopted city. St. John in his sixth chapter gives us the substance of this sermon, and tells us the sad result which followed.

Jesus tried to make the people understand that it is the spirit, not the body, which is of importance. But they clamored for bodily things, things which they could see and feel. They wanted worldly success for their Messiah. They asked Him to give them bread from heaven to eat, as their ancestors had been given bread in the desert, which fell from heaven, the "manna" of the Old Testament. Jesus told them that He was the true "bread of God," which came down from heaven to give "life to the world," saying that those who came to Him would never suffer from hunger, nor would those who believed in Him suffer from thirst. He meant, of course, that we are fed by our faith; that our faith gives us strength and comfort of spirit, as material food feeds our bodies. The Jews, however, objected

to His saying that He was "the bread of life," and "I have come down from heaven." They repeated again their old stupid question, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he claim now, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Jesus told them not to "murmur" amongst themselves. He reminded them that the manna which their ancestors ate did not keep them alive, for were they not all dead? It was not the earthly life which He would prolong for them, but the bread which He gave would give them eternal life after the earthly death. He tried to make them see that the bread He gave was His own body which He would sacrifice for them in His death, and that from His sacrifice of Himself they would learn the faith which would give them immortal life. But, so far from being able to understand Him, they only said, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" Finally they were so incensed against Him, because they did not understand, that many of those who had been following Him, followed Him no more. They contradicted Him and left Him.

Then Jesus turned to His twelve apostles, those who were nearest and dearest to Him, and uttered these pathetic words: "You do not want to go, too?" Peter replied with his characteristic enthusiasm, even in apparent defeat, "Lord, who

are we to go to? You have got words of eternal life, and we believe, we are certain, that you are the holy One of God."

To whom indeed should we go, if not to Christ? Where, in the history of our world, is there one above Him in the very purity of perfection? Every prophet of every other form of religious belief, when compared with Him, either historically, philosophically or morally, has always been found in some way inferior to Him.

But Jesus—and it would seem that the desertion of His other followers had made Him sorrowful—reminded them that, though Peter spoke loyally, one of them should betray Him, meaning, as we know, His apostle Judas.¹

While Jesus was still in Capharnahum, news came of the murder of certain Galileans in Jerusalem by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judæa. Pilate was a bloodthirsty and conscienceless man, like the Herods, and the Jews feared and hated him. Jesus was also warned at this time that Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, designed to kill Him, but He received this warning with indifference and contempt. "Go and tell that fox," He said, "I cast out dæmons, and perform cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I complete my task." Meaning, I shall continue my work until it is finished, and

¹ John vi, 27-71.

nothing can prevent me before my time is really come.

But Jesus knew now that the last months of His work were drawing near, and that He must go to Jerusalem and meet the fate prepared for Him, and to which He willingly submitted for the sake of mankind, both the righteous and the sinful. He knew that love conquers evil—that His love for the sinner turns back that sinner's heart from his sin, and makes him good. Some people say, if God is all-powerful, why should sin and evil exist at all? To this we can only reply that we, being mortal creatures, cannot fully understand the design of God in this world—any more than we can fully understand the mysteries of life and of death; but we can and do see that love conquers evil, that virtue conquers sin, so that though evil is allowed to exist, it exists only as an inferior thing, a thing which is constantly being conquered and destroyed by the superior and stronger power of love.

So Jesus now left Galilee, where He was rejected after all, and journeyed to Jerusalem. But He traveled slowly, preaching, teaching and healing the sick all the way. At first He sent messengers ahead to a little village of Samaria, to prepare people to receive Him. But these people, on learning that He was going to Jerusalem, because of their enmity with the Jews

would not receive Him at all. The apostles James and John, whom Jesus had once named the "sons of thunder," were angry at this disrespect for their Lord, and asked Jesus if they should cause fire to descend from heaven and destroy these unkind and inhospitable people. But Jesus rebuked them, telling them that they did not at all understand. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." In this way they were constantly misunderstanding. Though they were with Jesus continually they still failed to realize the beauty and lofty purity of His teaching. So is it hard for us all to understand, being so far above us.

They went therefore to another village in Samaria, and on the way a man came to Jesus and said, "I will follow you anywhere." But Jesus replied, "The foxes have their holes, the wild birds have their nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." Yes, Jesus had no home, nor did He ever possess a single bit of the earth where He labored for us.

We are not told anything further about this man, but no doubt he followed Jesus, though there was no comfort, no earthly success, to be won thereby. Indeed, many had followed Him as He left Galilee, to hear His preaching and to be healed by Him, and it cheered Him to see that some still came to Him to receive what He was

so willing to give. So now He sent forward seventy of these disciples, two by two, into every place where He intended to go, that the people might be prepared for Him and His followers, and telling them to heal on the way. He said to these disciples, "He who listens to you, listens to me, he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

This journey of the disciples was more successful, and they returned to Jesus full of enthusiasm. Then Jesus rejoiced. He was overjoyed to see His disciples doing their work successfully.

One day a lawyer, one of the "wise and prudent," came to Jesus to question Him and to draw Him into some error if possible. The lawyer asked, "Teacher, what am I to do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus, seeing the man's motive, asked him what he found in the law on that subject. And the man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole strength, and with your whole mind; also your neighbor as yourself." "'A right answer!' Jesus said; 'do that and you will live.'" But the lawyer desired to confuse Jesus, if possible, and asked, "But who is my neighbor?"

To answer him Jesus did as His custom was

—He told him a parable, and this was the story of the good Samaritan:

A man once set forth on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a short journey but a dangerous one, for the road was frequented by robbers who had no pity upon travelers, but took all the money and goods they had on their camels or asses, and often killed them. So, as this man traveled along he had the ill fortune to meet a party of these thieves of the road, who not only stole his money but even his clothes, and when he attempted to defend himself they wounded him also. Then they went away, and left the poor man suffering and half dead in the road.

As he lay there groaning, a priest came by. He saw the man, and heard his groans—but perhaps he was too busy to stop. He passed by and left the victim in the road, without help.

Later a Levite, who is a subordinate priest, came along, and he stopped and looked at the poor naked and wounded man, who now, seeing the Levite pause, had hope of succor. But the Levite, who perhaps was stupid and saw no means of helping a man in such a plight, the Levite too went away and left him.

But after a while a Samaritan came by, and when he saw the poor creature lying in the road groaning, he was sorry for him, and his sorrow was not only an emotion of sympathy, which is

very kind but does no practical good, it was a pity which passed at once into a desire to help and to save. It was like Jesus' own pity. So the Samaritan took from his goods some cloth and oil and wine, and stooping over the suffering man he bound up his wounds, applying to them the oil and the wine; and then, tenderly raising him, he set him on the beast which he had himself been riding, and walking by his side he journeyed onward with him until they came to an inn, where he carried the man indoors and tended and cared for him. The next day, as he was obliged to leave the man and continue on his own road, he said to the landlord of the inn, Here are two pence. See that this wounded man has all that he needs, and if you are obliged to spend more for him, do so, and I will pay you when I come back this way.

So, when Jesus had told this story, which you can read in the tenth chapter of Luke, He said to the lawyer, "Which of these three men, in your opinion, proved a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" And the lawyer was compelled to reply, "The man who took pity on him." Then, instead of merely saying, Therefore, when anyone behaves in a kind and neighborly manner to you, you must be grateful and love him as yourself, which may have seemed to be the moral of the story, Jesus said to the lawyer, "Go, and

do the same." Don't think of how another may be a true neighbor to you, but of how you may be a true neighbor to him. As Emerson aptly said, nearly two thousand years later, "The only way to have a friend, is to be one."

Thus the wily lawyer failed, as everybody always did, to turn Jesus aside from His own divine way of teaching.

CHAPTER XXI

JESUS CONTINUES HIS LAST JOURNEY

It is estimated that Jesus spent about two months in this last long journey from Galilee to Peræa, and from Peræa into Judæa to Jerusalem, and during this time many interesting events occurred, He told many parables and taught many lessons, of great numbers of which we have no record at all. As St. John says in the last paragraph of his Gospel: "Now there is much else that Jesus did—so much, that if it were written down in detail, I do not suppose that the world itself could hold the written records."

We say "long journey," speaking by comparison; for, as has been said, the distance from Nazareth in Galilee to Jerusalem in Judæa was but eighty Roman miles. But Jesus went aside into Peræa, and stopped by the way teaching and doing works of mercy. Probably He made nearly all of the journey on foot.

Now one day, in the course of this journey, there came to Jesus a young man who apparently desired to be taught, and who said, "Good teacher, what must I do, to inherit life eternal?"

First rebuking him gently for calling Him "good," for Jesus said there was none good but God, He told the young man that to have eternal life he must keep the commandments. The young man asked, Which commandments is it necessary for me to keep? Jesus repeated the commandments as to murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, defrauding, honoring our parents.

The young man appears to have been a virtuous young man. " 'Teacher,' he said, 'I have observed all these commands from my youth!'"

Jesus, as He looked at him, loved him; but saw at once where his weakness lay. So He said, "There is one thing you want, go and sell all you have; give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, take up the cross, and follow me."¹

But the young man was very rich, and he loved his wealth and the comfort and power it gave him, and he could not bear to give it up. So he would not, and "he went sadly away." He was not a bad young man—he desired to be good—but he had not learned to love God with all his heart and mind and soul, for when we do that we know spiritually, we know in our hearts, that we would be willing to give up everything for Him even though we may not be actually called upon

¹ Mark x, 21.

to do it. But the young man realized, sadly enough, that when called upon he was not willing.

After he had gone Jesus said to the disciples, "My sons, how difficult it is [for those who rely on money] to get into the Realm of God! It is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the Realm of God." Jesus meant that it is more difficult for a man who has wealth and power to renounce it and become humble and self-sacrificing, than it is for a man who is already poor, and therefore has less temptation to fall into the sin of pride. It is more difficult for a rich man, who is deceived by his own apparent greatness, to realize that he is only one of God's creatures like all the rest. The lesson of humility is harder for him to learn than for a powerless poor man.

When Jesus said this to the disciples, they were very much astonished. "Then who ever can be saved?" they said to themselves. But Jesus "looked at them and said, 'For men it is impossible, but not for God: anything is possible for God.' " ² God's love and unending mercy can soften the hardest heart, and bring men to Him through any difficulties whatever.

Jesus also taught them the value of earnestness and perseverance in our prayers for spiritual help. Suppose, He said, that a man should

² Mark x, 23-27.

go at midnight to borrow three loaves of bread from his friend, explaining that a guest had arrived unexpectedly at his house, and he had no bread to give him. The friend at first might refuse. "The door is now shut," he might say, "and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." But, if the man who knocked should persist urgently in his request, his friend would rise and give him the loaves of bread. Then Jesus said, "Ask, and the gift will be yours, seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will open to you." And again, "What father among you, if asked by his son for a loaf, will hand him a stone? . . . Well, if for all your evil you know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit from heaven to those who ask him?"³ Later He said to His disciples. "All that ever you ask in prayer you shall have, if you believe."⁴ Some of us pray most unworthily. Our feeling is half skeptical, and we think—though we are hardly conscious of it sometimes—"Now, I have prayed—let us see if He will answer." This is exactly the attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees toward Jesus. Are we then no better than they? And have we not an example, in the history of the sick woman who

³ Luke xi, 5-13.

⁴ Matt. xxi, 22.

touched Jesus in the crowd, and He knew at once that Faith had touched Him—is this not like sincerity in prayer, and that God knows if we be praying honestly or deceitfully, or even deceiving ourselves?

When Jesus and His disciples reached Ephraim, a town in southern Samaria, they rested there, and then left it to join the long caravan of pilgrims coming from Galilee to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Dedication, celebrated about the twentieth of December. This feast, like that of the Passover, lasted eight days, and during and after this brief period, though Jesus taught some of His greatest lessons, and performed some of His greatest miracles, the shadow of His approaching death only grew darker around Him. The Chief Priests, Scribes and Pharisees haunted His steps, and sought to draw the people's hatred upon Him, that they might be justified in ridding the land of so dangerous an enemy to the established order of things.

On reaching Jerusalem Jesus had gone to the Temple, and was walking in Solomon's Porch—so called because the material of which it was built had been a part of the ancient temple of Solomon—when suddenly the Pharisees came to Him, and began to put questions which they intended should trouble Him. How long will you keep us in doubt? they asked. "If you are the Christ,

tell us plainly." And Jesus replied patiently, "I have told you, but you do not believe; the deeds I do in the name of my Father testify to me." . . . "I and my Father are one——"

This statement, that He and God were one and the same, was just what the Jews were waiting for Him to say, that they might accuse Him of blasphemy. So they began picking up stones to stone Him.

Jesus perceived their threatening action, and He asked calmly, "I have let you see many a good deed of God; for which of them do you mean to stone me?" They replied it was not for His good works they would stone Him, but for blasphemy, that He made Himself out to be God. Then Jesus reasoned with them, "If I am not doing the deeds of my Father, do not believe me; but if I am, then believe the deeds, though you will not believe me—that you may learn and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." And though they were enraged against Him, though the very stones for their angry attack were in their hands, yet they did not stone or even hold Him. "He escaped their hands."⁵ It seemed as if some majesty of the Truth within Him prevented them.

One day when He taught in the Temple, the Pharisees and Chief Priests sent their officers

⁵ St. John x, 39.

to arrest Him, but the officers after hearing His words returned without Him, explaining that they had never heard any man speak like this man.⁶

Jesus then went to pass the night in prayer and rest on the Mount of Olives, outside the city, where, though it was the winter season and chilly, He slept in His cloak as usual. In the morning, refreshed, He returned to the Temple to preach. While He was there the Scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman who had been "taken in adultery," that abominable violation of the purity of marriage. They reminded Jesus that the law of Moses required that she be stoned. But what do you say should be done? they asked, hoping to entrap Him. Jesus made no reply. He only stooped, as though He had not heard them, and wrote with His finger on the ground. Then they asked Him plainly, Shall she be stoned? "He raised himself and said to them, 'Let the innocent among you throw the first stone at her.' " For the law was more severe to the women than to the men, and Jesus substituted justice and a higher law. Let him stone her whose innocence gave him the right to judge and punish her. But no one replied. They were all "convicted by their own conscience." So, one by one, they all went away, the older men first,

⁶ John vii, 32-46.

“till Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.” How her heart must have swelled with surprise and emotion, and adoration of Jesus, yes, and passionate penitence.

Jesus asked her, “Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she answered. Then Jesus said that He did not condemn her either. He told her to go, and “never sin again.”⁷ Instead of stones, she received pity and forgiveness, and hope for the future.

After more healing and more instruction, Jesus then left Jerusalem, amid constant threats from the Pharisees, and went over the Jordan into Peræa, where only He was safe from the death for which He was not yet ready.

It is probable that He would have preferred to go again to the little village of Bethany, near Jerusalem—only separated from it by a short walk over the Mount of Olives—where dwelt His friend Lazarus, with his sisters Mary and Martha. As so great a miracle occurred in connection with Lazarus, we shall see who these people were. They were, first of all, believers in Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, and we are told by St. John that Jesus loved them. Jesus often stayed with them on His journeys to and fro between Galilee and Jerusalem, and it must have been

⁷ John viii, 3-11. “It is uncertain to which, if any, of the canonical gospels this fragment of primitive tradition originally belonged.”—Moffatt.

pleasant to Him to rest with this quiet congenial family after the weariness of His constant work and travel, and the continual fret of His conflicts with the Pharisees.

Bethany was a pleasant, peaceful, tree-embowered village resting in a gracious hollow among the hills. The house where Lazarus lived is spoken of in the Gospels as Martha's house, or sometimes as the house of Simon the Leper, who, it is conjectured, may have been her father or her deceased husband. Martha was a well-meaning, bustling woman, useful and interested in the affairs of her household. So one day, before the time of which we are now speaking, Martha went busily about preparing for His refreshment, but Mary her sister, letting her own household duties wait while Jesus was just come, left all and came and sat at His feet and listened to His words.

When Martha saw that Mary had left her work and sat idle, eagerly drinking in what Jesus said, she was irritated. It seemed to her unjust that she should be left to do the work all alone. So she came to Jesus, perhaps flushed from her labors and a little out of temper, and said, "Lord, is it all one to you that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Come, tell her to lend me a hand."

But Jesus answered her, kindly, that Mary had

chosen what was best, and it should not be taken away from her. He wanted Martha to realize that our material wants should come after our spiritual wants. He knew He should not be long with them, and that Mary had been wise—had shown the right inclination—to listen first to His words of life,—afterwards she could serve Him with bread, and not more than was necessary. It was a gentle rebuke to those of us who become too much “cumbered” with the service of the body, and neglect the higher need of the soul.

CHAPTER XXII

LAZARUS IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

But it was not to Mary and Martha's Bethany that Jesus now retired to evade for a while longer those in Jerusalem who sought to slay Him; it was to another Bethany, and other parts, of Peræa, and here many came to Him, and many believed. But among them came as usual the Pharisees, to question Him slyly, treacherously.

Now while Jesus was in this region, He received word from His friends Mary and Martha, in their Bethany of Judæa, near Jerusalem, that their brother Lazarus was ill. Jesus loved Lazarus, and his sisters sent the message, "Lord, he whom you love is ill," for they expected that Jesus would come to Bethany to heal him, even though by returning so near to Jerusalem He incurred danger from the Jews.

But Jesus did not go at once. He said, "This illness is not to end in death; the end of it is the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." That is, this illness is not for the glory of death, but for the glory of God's power

over death. For He knew what was to come. So He allowed two days to pass.

Then He said quietly to His disciples, "Let us go back to Judæa." The disciples were alarmed; they asked how He could go again into Judæa where only a short time before the Jews had almost stoned Him—how could He venture so soon again into such danger? But Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; I am going to waken him." The disciples, whose first thought was always the matter-of-fact and literal one, thought He referred to natural sleep, so they said, to influence Jesus not to go, If he is able to sleep, he will get well. Jesus then said plainly, "Lazarus is dead." And then, "Come now, let us go to him."

One of the disciples, Thomas, called "the Twin," was of a very doubting and despondent nature. He loved the Lord, but he always saw the dark side of every event. So now he said to the others, "Let us go too, let us die along with him," for he was sure that when Jesus ventured into Judæa again He would be killed.

So they started on their walk to Bethany of Judæa, supposed to have been a distance of about twenty miles, and when they reached the village they remained outside in the country, probably to prepare their entrance with caution because of the presence of many Jews from Jerusalem, who

had come to the funeral of Lazarus to comfort his bereaved family in the usual way—for the family was prominent and well-known.

When Martha heard that Jesus was outside the village, she hurried forth secretly to meet Him, and the more quiet Mary remained in the house, mourning for her brother. Martha told Jesus that Lazarus had died on the same day she had sent Him the news of his illness, and her brother had now lain four days in the tomb. It was not unnatural that she should be inclined to reproach her Lord, whose power, had it come in time, would have saved her beloved brother. "Had you been here, Lord, my brother would not have died. But now—well, I know whatever you ask God for, he will grant you." So, as Martha had perfect faith, Jesus said, "Thy brother will rise again."

Martha misunderstood Him, and said, "I know he will rise at the resurrection, on the last day." But it was as if she would have added, "But oh, I need my brother here and now."

Then Jesus spoke those words that have brought balm and comfort to so many grief-stricken hearts: "I am myself resurrection and life: he who believes in me will live, even if he dies, and no one who lives and believes in me will ever die. You believe that?" And Martha, who did not perfectly comprehend His meaning, but who

had faith in Him, answered, "Yea, Lord: I do believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Jesus must then have asked for Mary—who, perhaps, He knew could understand better this highly spiritual teaching—for Martha hurried back to the house, and calling Mary away from the comforters who were with her, she said, "The Teacher is here, and he is calling for you." And Mary went out quickly to Jesus, who remained outside the village. The Jews thought she was going to her brother's grave, so they followed her.

When Mary came to Jesus her tears burst forth anew at sight of Him and the thought of her brother, and she fell down at his feet, "crying, 'Had you been here, Lord, my brother would not have died.'"

And Jesus was troubled when He saw Mary weeping, and also her friends who had come with her.

"Where have you laid him?" He said. They answered, "Come and see, Sir."

And then Jesus wept. Perhaps the powerful emotions of human compassion and sympathy, and the divine consciousness of His oneness with God, and the power over death which had been given Him by the Father, overcame Him.

Then the Jews saw how much Jesus had loved the dead man—that was all they would be able to

see in His holy and complicated emotion—and some of them sneeringly asked among themselves why He had not healed Lazarus and prevented his death, if He loved him so much; for, they said, this man has opened the eyes of the blind—a miracle which they had themselves witnessed—and why, therefore, could He not have saved His friend?

Jesus, troubled and sighing, “went to the tomb. It was a cave, with a boulder to close it.” These tombs were built often in the low hillsides, their fronts carved, and with a slab or large stone to close the opening.

Jesus told them to take away the stone. But now, when she saw that the grave was to be opened, Martha’s practical mind remembered what might be the result. So she reminded Jesus that as Lazarus had been dead nearly four days, his body would be offensive. For in that warm country it was necessary to bury the dead without delay. But Jesus said, in patient rebuke, “Did I not tell you, if you will only believe, you shall see the glory of God?” Then He lifted His eyes to Heaven, and spoke, “Father, I thank thee for listening to me. I knew thou wouldst always listen to me, but I spoke on account of the crowd around, that they might believe thou hast sent me.”

When He had thus given glory and thanks to God, Jesus cried aloud "Lazarus, come out."

What a moment of agonized suspense, of fear, of hope, for those who stood before the black opening of that tomb! And then the silence was broken by a faint stir within it, and the man who was dead appeared, with the bandages of the grave wrapped round his hands and feet, and a towel around his head.

The awed silence of the group standing before the tomb was broken by the authoritative voice of Jesus.

"Untie him, and let him move." So they took the grave-clothes off of the living Lazarus.

So is it always the voice of Jesus which breaks our grief-stricken silence as we stand before the tombs of those we love—His voice saying, "I am myself resurrection and life: he who believes in me will live, even if he dies, and no one who lives and believes in me will ever die." ¹

¹ John xi, 1-45.

CHAPTER XXIII

JESUS IS TRIUMPHANT

This stupendous miracle caused many of the Jews, who had come to Mary and Martha as comforters, to believe that Jesus was truly the Messiah. But there were others who, even though they were forced to believe, were filled with distrust and hatred of this Man who performed the deeds of God. So they returned in haste to Jerusalem, and told the Pharisees what they had witnessed.

The Pharisees and the High Priests then held a council. They were alarmed by this latest miracle which had been seen by so many, and which could not fail to bring all the people to believe in Jesus. If the people followed Jesus, and made Him their king, as they would surely do, this would be treason against their conquering rulers, the Romans, who would come and destroy them.

The High Priest was then a Jew named Caiaphas, a man of great authority. He said that there was but one course to follow—that Jesus must die. It was better, he said, that one man

should die, than that the whole nation should perish. (But as we know, the very opposite of this was true, and the nation was ruined after Jesus had been put to death.)

The high court of the Jews—called the Sanhedrin—consisted of seventy-one members, who were High Priests, elders of the people and Rabbis.

Now the Sanhedrin, under the law, had no right to carry out a sentence of death. They could pass the sentence, but they were not allowed to execute it: only the Roman authorities could do that. We shall see later how they managed to work their will. Meanwhile, they did not know where Jesus had gone, and they commanded that any man who knew where He was should immediately inform the Sanhedrin, that they might arrest Him.

When Jesus was told of the threatening action of the Sanhedrin, He left Bethany of Judæa and went to Ephraim in Samaria, for His time was not come yet. Here He remained for several weeks, teaching His apostles and other disciples, and preparing for His final sacrifice. Of this, however, His followers had no realization. They only thought of Him as the triumphant Messiah, He who raised Lazarus from the dead and performed countless other miracles. They were

never more full of enthusiasm and earthly hope than they were at this time.

It was now early spring, and the great Feast of the Passover was near at hand. From their retreat at Ephraim they could see the long bands of pilgrims from Galilee and other places, joyfully approaching Jerusalem for the feast which would last eight days and be for them full of excitement and religious happiness. But when Jesus descended from the high ground of Ephraim to the road, to go to Jerusalem, He walked alone before His followers, in godlike meditation. He had been explaining the spiritual nature of the Realm of God, and His disciples were astounded by His words, for their thoughts were earthly. St. Mark tells us the disciples "were in dismay, and the company who followed were afraid."¹ Later He called His apostles, and told them that they were now going to Jerusalem; that there He would be taken by the Jews and delivered over to the Gentiles—the Romans—who would mock and scourge and spit upon Him, and finally crucify Him; but that on the third day He should rise again. But most of them did not fully realize the truth of His words. Their minds were still full of triumphant worldly ideas and hopes. Even at this solemn time the mother of the two apostles, James and John—she who constantly

¹ Mark x, 32.

followed Jesus, with other faithful women believers, “ministering to him of their substance”—came to Him with her two sons, asking that they should sit, one on His right hand, one on His left, in glory. Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” Can you renounce as I renounce, humble yourselves as I humble myself? And it was evident that they could not else they would not have asked to sit in the highest place. Jesus explained to them, “You shall drink my cup, but it is not for me to grant seats at my right hand and at my left; these belong to the men for whom they have been destined by my Father.” The other apostles were much displeased with James and John for trying to secure for themselves the places of highest honor,—thereby proving themselves no more humble, perhaps, than James and John. So Jesus called them to Him, and explained that with the Gentiles the greatest were set up to rule over the others; but that with them it must be just the reverse. “Whoever wants to be great among you, must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of man has not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”²

² Matt. xx, 20-28.

But this was the hardest lesson of all for them to learn, as it still is for us.

They now approached the city of Jericho—a city which at that time was so beautiful with its innumerable palms and rose-gardens and date-groves that it was called the “Paradise of God,” though now it is only a wretched Arab village; and as they came near they passed a poor blind man named Bartimæus, who was begging by the roadside. Hearing the sound of many people passing Bartimæus asked who and what they were? They told him that it was Jesus of Nazareth passing by.

The fame of Jesus’ healing of the poor had evidently reached the helpless beggar, who had had small hope of ever coming near the great Prophet. But when they told him that Jesus, even Jesus, was passing near him, he cried out, “Son of David! Jesus! have pity on me.” But the people rebuked him—a mere blind beggar. How should he be allowed to disturb the Messiah on His road to the Passover? But Bartimæus, desperate with the fear of missing this great chance to have his sight restored, a chance which certainly would never come to him again, only cried louder, “Son of David, have pity on me!”

When Jesus heard these impassioned cries, hoarse with excitement, He stopped and ordered them to bring Bartimæus to Him, and when he

had come, Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man answered, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight." We can imagine how, with that tremendous request, the poor man's voice trembled and broke. And Jesus said, "Go, your faith has made you well."

Immediately the man *saw*, and he joined the caravan of pilgrims and followed Jesus, praising God, and all the people praised God too.³

They now entered the beautiful city of Jericho. The multitudes of people following Jesus were becoming more and more enthusiastic, more sure that the time of power and success was at hand, and there must have been loud and joyful sounds of singing and playing as they proceeded.

We must pause here to note that much of this enthusiasm was mere emotional excitement, and the tribute of thoughtless minds to the apparent victory of Jesus; for what did the people do later, when Jesus was taken prisoner? Where then were their loyalty and their defense of their King?

Naturally the townspeople flocked out to meet and see them, and among them was a man named Zacchæus who, because he was short of stature and could not see Jesus for the crowd, climbed up into a tree. This man was one of the many "publicans," or tax-collectors, who lived in Jer-

³ Mark x, 46-52.

icho in order to collect the taxes on a certain kind of balsam which grew there; and he was much disliked by the Jews who, as we have already learned, hated tax-collectors; and they especially hated this man because he was, like themselves, a Jew. Zacchæus also was an unjust man, who was suspected of collecting more than was actually due. Fancy then the surprise and even indignation of the people when they saw Jesus stop beside the tree where Zacchæus had climbed, look up and say, "Zacchæus, come down at once, for I must stay at your house today."

Stay at the house of Zacchæus, the dishonest tax-collector! Why, Jericho was a priestly city, where many lived who were high in the service of the Temple. Should the Messiah, now approaching the brilliance of success, now about to come into His earthly kingdom, as they thought, should He stay in the house of a man who was a tax-collector and a sinner? Thus thought the murmuring people.

But Zacchæus, surprised and overjoyed at this mark of favor from a Leader of the people, a Man about whom they were gathering with such excitement, and realizing at last, in a flash of spiritual light, that this Man performed miracles, was in fact divine, the Messiah,—touched to the heart's core by the cordial kindness of His voice, and the sudden consciousness that he, Zacchæus,

disliked and distrusted, and perhaps deserving it, was being raised to high honor by his Lord, was being trusted and even loved,—all this swift and strong emotion worked in Zacchæus the cure of penitence, the cure of his sin, and he said, “I will give the half of all I have, Lord, to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will give him back four times as much.” Then Jesus told Zacchæus that he was saved from his sin, saying, “For the Son of man has come to seek and save the lost.” ⁴

⁴ Luke xix, 1-28.

CHAPTER XXIV

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

After a brief stay at Jericho, the pilgrims set forth again for Jerusalem. The road now led up a difficult ascent and through a barren and rocky region. For fifteen miles they would have to toil upward. Jesus as before went alone in advance, while the people's glances dwelt upon Him with awe and wonder.

A long and wearisome march brought them to the little town of Bethany of Judæa—which was only separated from Jerusalem by a short walk over the Mount of Olives, or the "Olive-Orchard." Here at Bethany Jesus stopped, and went to stay in the home of His friends, Lazarus and Mary and Martha. It is interesting to know that historians can state the very probable date of His arrival here, Friday, March 31, A.D. 30.¹

The caravan of pilgrims now parted from their Leader, and went onward to the Passover at Jerusalem, singing as they entered the city the 118th Psalm, which begins, "O give thanks unto

¹ Farrar's "Life of Christ," p. 525.

the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth forever," according to their habit. Some of them stayed in the city itself—those who had friends there, or who had sufficient means to pay for lodgings, if indeed they could find any in the overcrowded place—and others camped outside the city gates, in the temporary shelters which to this day they erect on similar occasions. This was now six days before the great Feast of the Passover.

On the day following Jesus' arrival in Bethany—the day which, as it came before the Passover, the Jews called the "great Sabbath"—a supper was made for Him in the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. An incident occurred at this feast which seemed to mark the first definite movement of the tragedy which now began to be unfolded.

While Jesus sat at this supper with His friends, His own disciples and probably other guests, Mary, the quiet and deep-souled sister of Lazarus, perhaps vividly affected by her emotions of love and gratitude in the presence of the Savior of her brother and of all, brought a rich and costly gift that she might offer it to Him. It was a vase made of alabaster, and filled with a precious perfume known as Indian spikenard. She broke the vase, and gently poured the perfume over His head and His feet, and then, in

her humility and adoration, she knelt as Mary Magdalene had done in the house of Simon the Pharisee "while the atmosphere of the whole house was filled with the delicious fragrance."

But one of the disciples was especially displeased with Mary's loving act, which he deemed wasteful and extravagant. Why was not this spikenard sold, instead, and the money given to the poor? But it was not only of the poor he thought. It was the avarice, and the morbid jealousy and the restless sinfulness of Judas Iscariot which caused his strong protest. The other disciples, too, "murmured against" Mary. "But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why are you annoying her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you always have beside you, and you can be kind to them whenever you want; but you will not always have me. She has done all she could—she has anticipated the perfuming of my body for burial.' " ² Then He said that this deed of hers should be an eternal memorial to her name, wherever the Gospel should be preached. And this is indeed so.

Now Judas Iscariot (which means Judas of Kerioth, the town of Judæa whence he came) was in a deadly rage at this act of Mary's, and Jesus' defense of her; and it is evident that such a rage must have been growing for some time in that

² Mark xiv, 6-8.

dark heart of his. Perhaps, too, Jesus' frequent allusions to His coming death had deprived Judas finally of all hope of the material prosperity which his covetous soul had desired and expected as the reward for following Jesus. He must by this hour have lost all love for His Master, if indeed he could ever have had any real love in his soul; and he left the house, and flung himself out, raging and desperate, on the road to Jerusalem, with his mind full of a fatal decision.

What a journey that was, made in bitter silence and base desire for vengeance! It is the most repulsive example the world has ever known of the egotism of sin. And yet, must we not remember Jesus' own words on every occasion—even when He hung dying in agony on the cross—must we not have pity even for a Judas?

When this wretched man—for none is so wretched as the being lost in his own sin—reached Jerusalem, he sought out the Sanhedrin, that high court of the Priests and elders and Rabbis, which held its assemblies in a building probably near the eastern gate of the Temple, and which had set a price on the life of Jesus; and told them that Jesus would soon arrive at Jerusalem, that he would point Him out to them, and they could then arrest Him and do what they would. It is supposed that at this first interview no sum was mentioned as the payment to Judas for his

betrayal, but the next time he went to the Sanhedrin the sum he should receive was set at thirty pieces of silver, which would be about nineteen or twenty dollars, or about four pounds.

Now many Jews had come to the house of Lazarus where Jesus was taking His meal, in order not only to see One who had raised Lazarus from the dead, but to see Lazarus himself, about whom they would naturally feel much curiosity. These people learned that Jesus intended going the next day, Sunday, to Jerusalem. (It must always be remembered that Saturday is the Sabbath of the Jews.) There had been much speculation as to whether He would attend the Passover or not, whether He would dare come to Jerusalem where His life was in danger. So these visiting Jews at Bethany carried home the news to Jerusalem that Jesus was coming, and among the Galilean and other pilgrims, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem also, there was keen interest and expectation as to what might happen in consequence. The faithful then gathered together to welcome Him, and the excitement hourly grew greater.

Meanwhile Jesus set forth on foot on the road to Jerusalem, over the Mount of Olives, followed by His apostles and many other disciples. When they reached the little village of Bethphage, which is very near to Jerusalem, Jesus command-

ed two of His disciples to enter the village, saying that there they would find, tethered, the colt of an ass "whereon never man sat,"—according to St. Matthew the colt's mother was to be brought also—that they should loose this colt and bring it to Him, and that if anyone should question them they were simply to say that the Lord had need of it, and then no one would hinder them. So the disciples looked through the village streets, and surely enough, outside a house which stood at two crossing streets, they found the colt, and were about to lead it away when some people who saw them asked what they were doing? They answered as Jesus had told them, that the Lord had need of it. It was enough. No one raised any objection, and they led the colt to Jesus. Then certain of the disciples took off their cloaks, and laid them on the colt's back, and Jesus mounted. Thus the procession started for Jerusalem, while the people threw their cloaks on the ground to make a carpet for the Messiah to pass over, and others cut great branches from the palm and other trees, and laid them reverently before Him. And the people sang, and cried, "Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes in the Lord's name, the King of Israel!" which were portions from the Psalms of David. The people rejoiced, and all promises seemed on the point of being fulfilled, for had not the

prophet Zechariah said (ix. 9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." And the people also said to each other, This is he who raised Lazarus from the dead, which we ourselves saw, therefore we know.³ And because they had heard of the miracle, many people came out from Jerusalem to meet Him. But among them were some Pharisees, scornful and skeptical.

And now an impressive incident occurred. As the procession turned abruptly around a bend of the road leading over the Mount of Olives, the view of Jerusalem burst suddenly upon their sight. It was a magnificent scene. Jerusalem was then, according to the Roman historian Tacitus, one of the wonders of the world. Above the many stone towers and the powerful fortifications of the city, the snowy mass of the great Temple on Mount Moriah arose, dazzling the eyes with its whiteness and the Oriental splendor of its golden roof. And at this brilliant sight, what did Jesus do? He wept. He knew the city's coldness, its obstinacy, its great refusal of His love, and its consequent fate, one of the most shocking that ever befell a city of this world.

³ John xii, 17.

"If thou hadst known!" He said. If thou hadst known the Truth, which would have saved thee. And He foretold its fall.

In less than fifty years from that time the Roman emperor Titus had fulfilled this prophecy, and the siege of Jerusalem had become one of the most terrible events of history—a siege in which hundreds of the inhabitants were crucified, thousands killed in various horrible ways, other thousands sold as slaves, the apparently impregnable walls and towers thrown down, and the mighty and glorious Temple utterly destroyed. No wonder indeed that Jesus wept over the forthcoming fall of this city of strength and beauty, but of obstinate and hard-hearted and implacable pride.

There is a curious record that, when all was still secure and peaceful in Jerusalem four years before the outbreak of this fateful war, a maniac went about the streets crying out, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against the whole people." The authorities took him and by torture tried to make him give reasons for these menacing words, but he would say nothing but, "Woe! woe! to Jerusalem; woe to the city; woe to the people; woe to the holy house." During the siege of

Jerusalem this poor creature, endowed in his mental ruin with a gift of prophecy, was killed by a stone from a catapult, one of the powerful machines with which they battered down the great walls of those times. And, in these days, such stones as still remain of the mighty Jerusalem of Jesus' time, are sunk to a depth of many feet in the engulfing earth.

After this solemn pause at the sight of the holy city, Jesus went forward, and the multitude grew more dense as He approached and entered its gates. All this popular enthusiasm of a great crowd, with their Messiah riding peacefully in the midst, aroused answering excitement in the city, and also suspicion and, as usual, contempt. But they advanced amid this hostile atmosphere until they reached the hill of the Temple, and here they separated and went to cleanse themselves.

Jesus then once more entered the Temple. Once more He found it defiled and transformed into a house of traffic and materialism, and once more He cleansed it. He "proceeded to drive out those who were buying and selling. 'It is written,' he told them, 'my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.'"⁴ Three years before He had driven them out just as He did now, and warned and in-

⁴ Luke xix, 45-46.

structed them, but to no avail. To bargain and sell, to reap profits, to increase their earthly comfort and prosperity were more to them than respect for the Temple of God, or the words of Jesus.

After Jesus had put out all those who defiled the Temple, He began to teach the people, and to heal many blind and lame.

But what were the High Priests and Scribes doing all this time? Here was Jesus, the Prophet of the despised Nazareth, come into Jerusalem itself, taking upon Himself again to drive buyers and sellers out of the Temple. By what authority did He dare to perform such acts of power? So they came to Him in the Temple, and asked Him by what right He acted?

Then Jesus said He would first ask them a question, Was the baptism of John from Heaven, or of men? That is, was John's authority for baptizing the people from God, or from men? And they were afraid to answer Him, because they reasoned, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Why did you not believe him?' And if we say, 'From men,' the whole of the people will stone us: for they are convinced John was a prophet.'" So they weakly replied that they could not tell whence came John's authority. Then Jesus said to them, "No more will I tell you what authority I have for acting as I do."

Thus He once more silenced their petty and dishonest quibbling.⁵

But hearing the voices of the boys in the courts of the Temple—children employed perhaps in the musical services—who in their innocent trust believed in Jesus, and cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David”—the High Priests and Scribes called Jesus’ attention to this, probably to rebuke Him for bringing the children to have faith in Him, an impostor. “And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’ ”⁶ So they could make no effective answer to Him, and were all the more angry. After this Jesus spoke these merciful words: “I have come as light into the world, that no one who believes in me may remain in the dark. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, it is not I who judge him; for I have not come to judge the world but to save the world.”⁷

Jesus then left them, and retired again to Bethany near by, to pass the night.

⁵ Luke xx, 1-8.

⁶ Ps. viii, 2.

⁷ John xii, 46-47.

CHAPTER XXV

JESUS SILENCES THE SADDUCEES

'All this time the conspiracy against Jesus was growing more and more menacing. It was announced that anyone who should dare to proclaim his belief that Jesus was the Messiah would be excluded for thirty days—and perhaps longer—from the synagogue. This excommunication was called the *cherem*, and no Jew would willingly subject himself to its disgrace. So that, even though St. John tells us there were some of the rulers of the people who were inclined to have a kind of faith in Jesus, and who perhaps partially, at least, understood Him, they feared to express an opinion which would expose them to the contempt or hatred of their contemporaries. In fact, Jesus was in constant personal danger each time He entered Jerusalem, but it was His intention to go there daily.

One day, after a night's repose in Bethany, Jesus set forth with His disciples over the Mount of Olives. It must have been that they had not yet eaten, for on the way Jesus was hungry, and seeing a fig tree by the wayside, He approached

to pick its fruit. But the tree bore nothing but leaves: it was barren. When the Lord had need of its fruit, it had none to show. In order to teach His disciples the lesson of fruitfulness, of bringing forth good deeds as an evidence of the sincerity and worth of our faith, Jesus said, "‘May no fruit ever come from you after this!’ And instantly the fig tree withered up."¹ So they were taught that a faith which has only words, is like the fig tree that had only leaves. But when the disciples were surprised at this miracle of the withered tree, Jesus told them that pure faith, faith without any alloy of doubt, could do deeds more wonderful than this. "Have faith in God," He said to them; but warned them not to pray with an unforgiving heart.²

They went as usual to the Temple, and here the people gathered around Jesus and listened to His parables, some believing, some doubting, but all deeming Him a Prophet, and held spell-bound by His divine eloquence. So the High Priests, Scribes and Pharisees burned with rage against Him whom they had not been able to humiliate or confuse before the people, and they formed a new plot. They sent to Him a company of Pharisees and Herodians, as we know the fol-

¹ Matt. xxi, 18-19.

² Mark xi, 22-26.

lowers of Herod were called. These two parties were generally bitterly opposed to each other, but so great was the desire of all to destroy Jesus, that even these enemies united against Him. To the Temple they came, therefore, craftily plotting and planning, and decided upon the following ruse: to ask Jesus if it was right to pay tribute to Cæsar, who was the Roman emperor Tiberius.

It must be understood that the Jews always objected to paying taxes, or tribute, to their Roman conquerors, though they were compelled to do so. Their reason for this objection can be traced far back in their history. They had always believed that each man held his land as a fief—a sort of loan—from Jehovah Himself, and though he had always paid his taxes to the actual owner of the land, this owner gave the taxes to the Levites, or inferior priests, to be used in the service of Jehovah's Temple. So the Jews thought that if they paid taxes to the Roman emperor, it was acknowledging a king other than Jehovah. In their minds, therefore, it was a kind of sin, and yet the Romans obliged them to do this. So it was a very dangerous question these hypocrites now put to Jesus before the people. They addressed Him in these flattering and deceitful words:

“Teacher, we know you are sincere and fearless; you do not court human favor, you teach the Way of God honestly. Is it right to pay taxes to Cæsar or not? Are we to pay, or are we not to pay?”

Jesus of course knew their hypocrisy, and that they had come to entrap Him if possible, pretending to be candidly seeking for information. So He said, “Why tempt me?” It was as if He had said, you foolish men, why do you give yourselves the trouble to hide your true motives from me? Do you not know that your hearts are as open books before me? Instead of answering them directly, therefore, He said, “Bring me a penny, that I may see it.” And they brought the penny not knowing at all how He would answer them, and probably thinking that this time surely they had snared Him, and He would be put in the wrong before the people; for if He counseled them to pay tribute to Cæsar it was a violation of their religious law, and if He counseled them not to pay, it would bring down upon His head the wrath of the Roman authorities.

Jesus took the penny in His hand, the little coin known as a *denarius*. On one side of it was stamped the face of the Roman emperor Tiberius, on the other his title, Pontifex Maximus.

Jesus asked them, "Whose likeness, whose inscription is this?" They could only reply that it was Cæsar's. And Jesus said, "Give Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, give God what belongs to God." ³ That is, do your duty in the world you are sent to live in, abide by the law, but do not forget to pay unto God the dues of reverence, of adoration, of love and obedience which belong to Him. For if men do not forget that, will they not also be good citizens of the State? If men obeyed God perfectly would they not be good citizens of a good State? for a man's neighbor would then be loved as himself, and the evils resulting from greed and selfishness would disappear.

When Jesus made this immortal reply—a whole sermon teaching the people their civil and religious duty—they were astonished. Again their subtleties were frustrated by the few and simple words of Truth.

After this another interesting question was put to the Master, and this time by a party of Sadducees. The Sadducees were of the nobility, "the Temple nobility," and held the office of Chief Priest generation after generation. But they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. There was a certain fineness in their idea that God should be served without hope of reward;

³ Mark xii, 13-17.

but unfortunately, as they knew little of the beauty of mercy to others, as they were judges who condemned others without clemency according to the strict, often unjust, letter of the law, they did not, for this and other reasons, always serve God, in any sense. As to the resurrection, they were inclined to hold the idea up to ridicule, because their conception of "eternal life" was altogether an earthly one. Their minds could not rise above the material facts of everyday life—in which respect they were like a lumbering beetle wandering in a beautiful garden, who does not believe in the existence of sights and sounds which his own eyes and ears are incapable of seeing and hearing. So these Sadducees, dignified and proudly egotistical men, accustomed to that homage and respect from their fellow beings which has so unbalancing an effect upon most men's minds, came to Jesus and related to Him the rather absurd case of a woman who had been married to seven successive husbands, all of whom had died. Finally, the woman died too. Then they asked, "At the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be?"

Jesus then said an astonishing thing to them—they, the Sadducees, whose knowledge of the Scriptures was perfect. He said, "Is this not where you go wrong?—You understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. When

people rise from the dead they neither marry nor are married, they are like the angels in heaven."

These words have saddened some people whose marriage has been happy and blessed. But why should it do so? Jesus never said that those whose souls are akin should be *separated* after death. And He only referred here to our earthly institution of marriage, an institution necessary in its appropriate time and place, and the foundation of true and orderly living here, but which if neither needed nor desired after death would not be missed,—any more than some of our customs during early childhood are needed, desired or missed after we have grown up. For the joys of maturity take the place of the joys of childhood, and each is sufficient in its turn.

As to the resurrection, Jesus continued to refer his questioners to the ancient Scriptures, in which they were so learned, and asked if they did not remember how, when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, He said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were then dead, and would God call Himself a God of dead men? Jesus said, "He is not the God of dead people but of living. You are far wrong." Once more the Sadducees could not answer Him.

During this conversation a Scribe was stand-

ing by who had been impressed by the reasoning of Jesus. So he asked Him, "What is the chief of all the commands?" A very important question.

Jesus answered, "The chief one is: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength.* The second is this: *You must love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other command greater than these."

The Scribe answered, "Right, Teacher! You have truly said, He is One, and there is none else but Him. Also, to love him with the whole heart, with the whole understanding, and with the whole strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself—that is far more than all holocausts and sacrifices."

Jesus looked upon the man with approval for this reply, and said, "You are not far off the Realm of God." After that no one dared ask Him any more questions.⁴ This was in fact the last time Jesus was questioned, until He stood His so-called trials.

⁴ Mark xii, 18-34.

CHAPTER XXVI

JESUS INSTITUTES THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jesus continued teaching the people in the Temple, and among them must have been many of the vast multitude who had come to the Feast of the Passover. Some of the Temple Courts were so spacious that at least six thousand people could enter at one time, and this gives some idea of the size of the congregations who listened to Jesus. He now warned them against the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees whose questions they had heard, counseling them to follow the words of those men but not their deeds. They talked, but did not act, well. He accused them of cruelty to others, and of vanity because they only did good works in order that men should see them and praise them, and because they liked to have the best and most honorable seats at feasts and in church. "Woe to you," He said, "You impious Scribes and Pharisees! You shut the Realm of heaven in men's faces; you neither enter yourselves" nor let others enter. You are not good yourselves, and by your wicked example you prevent others from being good.

He called them "blind guides," and "senseless and blind." It is a magnificent denunciation of hypocrisy, and represents one of the few occasions when Jesus taught in the righteous spirit of a powerful indignation.

But even then, His heart ached over His people who turned away from the love and mercy He offered them, and His voice broke upon those pathetic words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! slaying the prophets, and stoning those who have been sent to you! How often I would fain have gathered your children as a fowl gathers her brood under her wings! But you would not have it! See, *Your House is left to you, desolate.*" For He, their rejected Savior, should soon be taken away, and with Him should depart for a season the mercy of God.¹

As they were about to leave the Temple that day, the disciples pointed out the huge stones of the building, and the formidable strength of it all. How surprised they were when Jesus replied, "You see all this? I tell you truly, not a stone here will be left upon another, without being torn down." Only too well, as we have seen, was this prophecy fulfilled. The Jewish historian Josephus relates that in the terrible siege of Jerusalem, less than a half century later, not only was the city laid in ruins, but 1,100,000

¹ Matt. xxiii.

men were killed, and 97,000 taken captive as slaves. The scenes of that siege, as described by Josephus, are more than horrible.

As Jesus and the disciples paused while in the Court of the Women, another incident occurred of quite a different kind. In this Court were thirteen chests, placed there to receive the people's contributions to the Temple. As Jesus watched them dropping in their alms, the rich who gave gold and silver, and the poor who gave what they could, there passed along a poor widow. Hers was probably the smallest contribution of all, for she gave two mites, which are of the value of two thirds of a farthing, and a farthing would be about an eighth of a cent. Yet, as this was all that she had to give, Jesus at once called the attention of His disciples to her act of true charity. He said, "I tell you plainly, this poor widow has put in more than them all; for these people all contributed out of their surplus, but she has given out of her neediness all her living." ²

Farrar quotes this good saying from St. Ambrose: "One coin out of a little is better than a treasure out of much; for it is not considered how much is given, but how much remains behind."

Thus with this last lesson emphasizing the

² Luke xxi, 1-4.

value of self-sacrifice, Jesus left the Temple forever.

It was Tuesday as they now passed out of the gate of Jerusalem, and made their way toward Bethany over the Mount of Olives. But as they sat there resting, Jesus preached to them that sermon in which He spoke of the end of the world, and of His second coming in great glory.³ After this, they resumed the walk to Bethany, and here in the quiet and calm of this small village Jesus passed the following day in meditation and teaching, and preparation for the tragic fate which was now drawing so near. It was indeed but two days distant; but the disciples were still unaware of it.

When Thursday came—which in the Middle Ages used to be called Green Thursday—Jesus sent Peter, and John whom He so loved, into Jerusalem to prepare for them all the solemn Feast of the Passover. And when they asked Him to tell them where to go, He said that as they would enter the city they would meet a man carrying a jar of water, and that they should follow him, and when he arrived at a house they should enter after him. Then they should say to the owner of the house, the “goodman,” “The Teacher asks you, Where is the room in which I can eat the Passover with my disciples? Then

³ Mark xiii, 3-37.

he will show you a large room upstairs with couches spread; make your preparations there."

All these events befell as Jesus said, and in this goodman's house they prepared the Passover for Him. And it was at this last feast that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, the Blessed Sacrament.

The Passover feast then was celebrated in this upper chamber, furnished with the necessary tables and couches, and here Jesus came and with His twelve apostles reclined at the table; for it was the custom of those days not to sit upright at table, as we do, but to recline on couches supplied with cushions, resting usually on the left elbow and leaving the right arm free. At Jesus' side was John whom He loved. If we may judge from the Gospels themselves, that written by John shows him to have been the most spiritual of them all, and possibly it was this quality which, humanly speaking, so endeared Him to His Lord.

At this supper, among the loyal apostles, sat the black-browed Judas, who had bargained to betray Jesus to the Jews. We do not know what caused the childish dispute among them as to who was the greatest, but probably for this reason Jesus taught them a lesson in humility which must have caused them to redden with shame. He arose, and taking water in a basin,

laying aside His garments, and wrapping a towel about Him, He stooped and washed the feet of all the disciples, and wiped them upon the towel which He had wrapped about Him, just as the humblest slave would perform that lowly service. Peter indeed protested, and with vigor, against this voluntary humiliation of his Master, but Jesus said, "You do not understand just now what I am doing, but you will understand it later on. . . . Unless I wash you, you will not share my lot." Then He put on His robe and returned to His central place at the table, and said, "Do you know what I have been doing to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right: that is what I am. Well, if I have washed your feet, I who am your Lord and Teacher, you are bound to wash one another's feet; for I have been setting you an example, that you should do what I have done to you." ⁴ That is, if I lay aside all thought of myself, and stoop and serve you, surely ye should serve one another.

And now, during the ceremony of this last feast, Jesus gave thanks for the bread, and broke and gave it to them, "Saying, This means my body given up for your sake; do this in memory of me. So too he gave them the cup after sup-

⁴ John xiii, 4-15.

per, saying, This cup means the new covenant ratified by my blood shed for your sake.”⁵

And since that time the Holy Communion, the eating of the symbolic bread and drinking of the symbolic wine together in remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself for us, has been the holiest ceremony, in one form or another, of the Christian Church.

We do not know if the traitor Judas shared in this loving communion or not: he may have already departed. But we know that before he went forth Jesus became troubled, and said to them, “Truly, truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” Then all the disciples were troubled in their turn, not knowing “which of them he meant.”

Peter spoke to John, who was close beside Jesus—for “he was the favorite of Jesus”—to ask Him who was the traitor. Jesus said, “The man I am going to give this piece of bread to, when I dip it in the dish.”

This giving of bread would not seem strange, as it was customary among those who were at table together. So Jesus dipped the bread in the dish, and gave it to Judas Iscariot. And Judas, whose evil conscience betrayed him, immediately rose and went away. “And it was night.”

⁵ Luke xxii, 19-20.

Jesus knew that he had gone directly to the High Priests to betray Him, and that His hour was come. And He spoke to them all with the tenderness of the parting He knew was near, calling them "dear children." "I give you a new command," He said, "to love one another—as I have loved you, you are to love one another. By this everyone will recognize that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."⁶ The 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of St. John are full of all the beautiful things He now said to them, promising that He would not leave them "forlorn." "I will ask the Father to give you another Helper to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth," which is the Holy Ghost.

It seems almost incredible that even now they did not fully realize His coming death. Peter asked, "Lord, where are you going?" And Jesus said He was to go where Peter could not now follow, though he should follow later. Then Peter said, "Lord, why cannot I follow you just now? I will lay down my life for you." As in reality, though much later, he did.

Then Jesus must have smiled upon him with divine pity, as He said, "Lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I tell you before the cock crows you will have disowned me thrice over."⁷

⁶ John xiii, 33-35.

⁷ John xiii, 36-38.

For He knew the weakness of the human spirit, even when it feels itself most strong.

At the end of the supper according to custom they sang a Psalm, which it is supposed was the "Great Hallel." This was Psalm cxxxvi, usually sung after the Passover, and beginning, "O give thanks unto the Lord"; and then they set out to pass the night in the Garden of Gethsemane which lay a short distance from the city walls.

CHAPTER XXVII

JESUS IS BETRAYED

The garden, or orchard, of Gethsemane was a quiet spot where Jesus went often to meditate and pray. Gethsemane means "oil-press," and it was so called because the owner had there set up a press with which he extracted the oil from his olives. The garden was full of olive and other trees, and low bushes, and here Jesus came with the disciples who were now at last solemn with premonitions of serious trouble.

Jesus went apart from the rest, taking with Him Peter and John and James; and telling them to watch and wait for Him, He went further away to pray alone. As He prayed the time of great anguish came upon Him. He struggled with pain which we, being only human, cannot imagine at all. The knowledge of His approaching death was nothing compared to the divine suffering to which His soul now had to submit, His final endurance of the terrible and crushing burden of the sins of the world. We know, as Farrar reminds us, that thousands of men and women—Christian martyrs and others,

even sinful people—have submitted to mere death without a murmur; so we know that the thought of death was nothing to our Lord Jesus Christ. But what caused His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, such agony that His sweat was “dropping to the ground like clots of blood,”¹ was a sorrow and a struggle whose depth we, in our human limitations, cannot conceive. It was so extreme that He prayed, “Father, if it please thee, take this cup away from me. But thy will, not mine, be done,”—words which have inspired many a grieved and shrinking human soul to resign itself nobly to the will of God.

When Jesus came back to the three disciples He found them asleep, and He said, in gentle reproach to Peter, “Are you sleeping, Simon? Could you not watch for a single hour? Watch and pray, all of you, so that you may not slip into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.”²

Then He went back again, and His intense prayer and His agony were renewed; but again when He returned He found them sleeping, for they were overcome by weariness.

Then Jesus said, “Come, get up, here is my betrayer close at hand.”

¹ Luke xxii, 44.

² Mark xiv, 36–38.

And they saw a crowd of men approaching—Roman soldiers, and servants of the Temple, armed with sticks, some carrying lanterns, and at the head of them was Judas Iscariot.

Jesus advanced immediately to meet them, asking whom they were looking for. Various voices replied excitedly, "Jesus the Nazarene."

Jesus, standing there in His divine majesty, said only, "I am he."

Whether it was the tone of His voice, which had often before awed and overcome His enemies, or whether the power of His divinity suddenly flashed over their souls, like dazzling light, we do not know; but those who had so threateningly advanced upon Him, at the sound of those words, "I am he," suddenly recoiled "and dropped to the ground."³

So He asked them again, as if to break the spell that had fallen upon them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they answered again, "Jesus the Nazarene." Then He said, "I told you that I am he: if it is I you are looking for, let these men get away," meaning His disciples.

But Peter, "who had a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear." Jesus said to Peter, "Sheathe your sword. Am I not to drink the cup which the Father has handed me?"

³ John xviii, 6.

Then, at the command of their captain, the Roman soldiers bound Jesus' hands behind Him, and led Him back to Jerusalem through the night, the crowd closing in behind them. And Jesus made no resistance, neither first nor last.

Though it was now late in the night, Jesus was taken at once to Annas, (called also Hanan), the former High Priest, who was the cruel and influential father-in-law of Caiaphas, the actual High Priest. This Annas was a Sadducee, rich, powerful and avaricious, and his bitterness against Jesus can be traced to his fear that Jesus' popularity with the people would draw them away from the influence of the priests, and his anger at Jesus' having twice cleansed the Temple, driving out from it the commercial element in which this Annas and his covetous family are said to have had a financial interest. It is known that they had founded certain shops where "legally pure" articles were sold, and that they, by wrong manipulation, had raised the price of doves for the sacrifices of the poor. But whatever may have been the chief causes of this abominable old man's hatred of Jesus, it is clear that he was such a strong and determined enemy that he has gone into history with the terrible name of "the murderer of Jesus." Even a writer in the Talmud, the great book, as you know, of Jewish civil and religious law and tradition, calls

Annas and his family "the viper brood." This then was the sort of man before whom Jesus was first led to be judged.

Of course these trials of Jesus were no trials at all—they were merely a murderous conspiracy.

This Annas, then, asked Jesus "about his disciples and about his teaching."

Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews gather; I have said nothing in secret. Why ask me? Ask my hearers what I have said to them; they know what I said."

It will be noticed that while Jesus would always answer any question which He knew to be honest, while He would give all His strength to explanations sincerely asked for, and would preach to the lowest being with as much—or more—willingness as to the highest—we remember how He first definitely announced Himself as the Messiah to the obscure woman beside the well in Samaria—He would not, on the contrary, always answer questions whose askers He knew to be hypocrites and liars.

But when He thus calmly replied to Annas, one of the priest's menials exclaimed, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" and struck

Jesus. This was the first blow our Lord received.

And how did He answer His assailant? Only with these words of self-restraint, intelligence, and judgment: "If I have said anything wrong, prove it; if I said what was true, why strike me?" If Jesus had said evil things, here was His trial and the time to accuse Him; but if He had spoken good things, why should He be attacked? So the brutal fellow only appeared to be what he was, a fool.

As Annas, with all his cunning, could draw nothing from Jesus, he sent Him, bound, to his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the real High Priest, who it is supposed occupied the same palace as Annas.⁴

Caiaphas was then presiding over the Sanhedrin, the great Jewish Court. Twenty-three members were required to be present at a meeting. There they sat at this unusual hour, these Jewish priests and elders, in a circular hall, on divans placed opposite each other, and with Caiaphas in the middle at one end.

Jesus was brought in, closely guarded, and placed before Caiaphas. The Court had sought in vain to procure true witnesses against Jesus—they could find none. Therefore they had decided to bring witnesses of any kind, even false

⁴ John xviii, 19–24.

witnesses, in order that they might try and condemn their prisoner without further and dangerous delay. So the false witnesses were heard, but their evidence proved to be of no value. And all the time while they tried to spin this web of falsehood around Him, Jesus kept silent. Finally came two men who accused Him of saying, "I can destroy the temple of God and build it in three days." Now Jesus had said, "Destroy this sanctuary and I will raise it up in three days"—meaning the temple of His own body which should be put to death, and His resurrection after three days. So He made no reply to this testimony. What was the use? Would such men be able to understand?

Then Caiaphas arose, in all probability enraged, and said, "Have you no reply to make? What of this evidence against you?"

But Jesus was silent. Then Caiaphas, driven desperate by the unbroken silence of his victim, cried out, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Then Jesus spoke. "Even so! But I tell you, in future you will all see *the Son of man seated at the right hand* of the Power and *coming on the clouds of heaven.*"⁵

This then at last was the "blasphemy" which they had been longing to hear that they might

⁵ Daniel vii, 13.

condemn Him. Caiaphas tore his clothes, after the lawful manner of the High Priest on hearing any blasphemous words, and exclaimed triumphantly, "He has blasphemed! What more evidence do we want. Look, you have heard his blasphemy for yourselves! What is your view?"

Then amid silence, the calm and patient silence of Jesus, came the fatal judgment from these dishonorable judges, "He is doomed to death."⁶

⁶ Matt. xxvi, 57-66.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SO-CALLED TRIALS OF JESUS

As a night session of the Sanhedrin was not legal, it was necessary for these men to meet again in the morning in order to condemn Jesus legally, and send Him then to the Roman authorities, for the confirmation and execution of the sentence of death; for the Sanhedrin could judge and condemn, but had no legal right under the Roman law to inflict death.¹ Jesus therefore was led away by guards, to be held prisoner through the remainder of the night; and as they led Him away, bound and defenseless, the menials and servants gathered around Him, and with the petty assurance of the ignorant and cowardly in the presence of greatness which has been apparently deprived of its power, they ridiculed Him and struck Him, and spat on Him, and knelt before Him in mockery.

This scene humiliated not Jesus, the Son of God, but to this day, to this hour, it humiliates us, that we are members of a human race capable of such incredible meanness of spirit.

¹ Hausrath's "History of New Testament Times, The Time of Jesus," Vol. I, p. 82.

While these events were occurring, Peter and John had followed Jesus into the palace of the High Priest, and were anxiously awaiting the result of their Master's trial. It was a chilly spring night, verging toward dawn, and some of the servants had made a fire of coals, and Peter stood with them warming himself. A maid-servant said, "You were with Jesus of Nazareth, too." And Peter, afraid to reply truthfully, said, "I have no idea what you mean." And a cock was heard crowing. Then the maid began to tell the others, "That fellow is one of them." But Peter, more and more afraid, denied again—and again a cock crew. A third time also he denied that he knew Jesus, and the consciousness of what he was doing so irritated him that he cursed, and said, "I do not know the man you mean." And the cock crew for the third time.

As they were leading Jesus, still bound, from one part to another of the palace, the procession passed Peter, and Jesus heard his denial.

"The Lord turned round and looked at Peter." Then Peter remembered what the Lord had said, and he "went outside and wept bitterly."

When the morning dawned, Jesus, after a night of lowest insult and sleeplessness, was taken once more before the Court of the Sanhedrin, which—except two of its members named Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea—confirmed the

sentence of death, and ordered that Jesus should be taken before the Roman Procurator, or governor, whose name was Pontius Pilate, and who would have the power to command that Jesus be put to death.

When Judas Iscariot heard that Jesus was thus condemned, the terrors of remorse descended upon him. He seemed all at once to realize his own crime. He rushed wildly to the Chief Priests and elders, giving back to them the thirty silver pieces and cried out to them, "I did wrong in betraying innocent blood." But they only stared at him, and replied coldly, "What does that matter to us? It is your affair, not ours." Then this miserable wretch threw the pieces of silver on the floor of the Temple and went away and hanged himself. Thus died Judas Iscariot.

The Chief Priests cared nothing for Judas or his fate, but they were concerned as to what to do with the money, which, being "the price of blood" could not lawfully be put into the treasury of the Temple. So they decided to buy with it a field, called the Potter's Field, where strangers might be buried; and to this day every burial ground for poor strangers and paupers is known as the Potter's Field.

Now as to Pontius Pilate, he had come from Cæsarea to Jerusalem in order to guard the public peace during the excitement of the great Feast

of the Passover, and had established himself as usual in the palace on Mount Zion, as that high quarter of the city was called, which had been built by Herod the Great. It was a magnificent and luxurious abode, lying probably southwest of the Temple hill; with numberless apartments and intricate corridors crossing each other, with various arrangements of pillars and columns, and adorned with all sorts of vessels of massive gold and silver. The following description of the ground around the palace, which Hausrath quotes from Bell,² reads like an account of the modern park of Versailles: "The open spaces around the palace were everywhere planted with long avenues of trees of various species; beside them were broad canals and basins rich in all sorts of works of art, through which water poured forth."

To this rich and worldly palace, at probably about seven o'clock in the morning, the members of the Sanhedrin and the other Chief Priests and elders brought Jesus, bound, to the Judgment Hall of Pilate, but none of them entered the Hall lest they, as orthodox Jews, be polluted, so they remained outside. There Pilate went out to them, and being a Roman he felt only suspicion and contempt for them. He now asked them of what they accused Jesus? They replied,

² Hausrath's "The Time of Jesus," Vol. II, p. 257.

“We have discovered this fellow perverting our nation, forbidding tribute being paid to Cæsar, and alleging he is King Messiah.” Though part of these accusations were totally false, they made use of them, knowing that they would immediately prejudice Pilate against the prisoner, Pilate being a Roman official. And they added that had He not been a malefactor, a criminal, they would not have brought Him to Pilate. But Pilate knew their fanaticism and excitability, and had no faith whatever in the justice of their judgment, nor did he like to become involved in a man’s death without being sure it was deserved, for fear of troublesome consequences. So he said, “Take him yourselves and sentence him according to your own Law.” But the Jews replied, “We have no right to put anyone to death.” So Pilate returned to the Judgment Hall to examine the prisoner himself.

There is, in the Church of San Rocco at Venice, a group of pictures painted by Tintoretto which tell the story of our Lord Jesus Christ. In one of them He stands like a majestic white spirit, glowing as if with the intensity of His own divine purity. To one seeing Him with the eyes of the spirit, He must have looked like this as He stood in the perfect majesty of sinlessness before Pilate in the Judgment Hall.

Pilate entered, and bade Jesus approach. He

saw a Man worn from fatigue, from persecution, from blows, bearing on His calm face the outer marks of the vilest insult. Pilate, looking at Him in wonder, said, "Then you are king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Are you saying this of your own accord, or did other people tell you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew?" (that I should call you king?) "Your own nation and the high priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

To this direct question Jesus did not reply. He only said, "My realm does not belong to this world; if my realm did belong to this world, my men would have fought to prevent me being handed over to the Jews. No, my realm lies elsewhere."

Pilate naturally considered this the speech of a dreamer, a harmless dreamer. To him a king meant a ruler, ruling visibly over material things. Pilate did not even believe, as the Jews did, in one God. He was a heathen. So he looked with not unkind contempt upon Jesus standing before him, pale and disordered and wasted, and talking, with indeed some strange kind of serenity and majesty, about kingdoms.

So Pilate said again, "So you are a king? you!" And Jesus replied, "Certainly, I am a king." "This is why I was born, this is why I came into the world, to bear testimony to the

truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

And Pilate said, "Truth! what is truth!" What do you mean, what are you talking about? For if the Jews themselves could not understand Jesus, how should Pilate? We know that Pilate was a mercenary, cruel man, without conscience, and had often proven himself weak and vacillating in his dealing with the Jews. Now, therefore, he must have been strongly affected by the personality of Jesus; some stirring of perhaps mere superstition must have warned him to be cautious, for he would not commit himself to any action. He returned to the men of the Sanhedrin, the High Priests and elders, and said to them, "I cannot find anything wrong about him." ³

³ Luke xxii, 63-71; Luke xxiii, 1-4; John xviii, 12-40.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STRUGGLE OF PILATE

Now Pilate suddenly remembered that they had said Jesus was disturbing the nation from Galilee to Jerusalem, so he asked if He were a Galilean, and on being told that He was, Pilate decided to rid himself of his present quandary by sending Jesus to be judged by Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, who had come to Jerusalem to the Passover, not from a sense of religious duty, of course, but to please his people for political reasons, and himself enjoy the excitement of a great feast at Jerusalem.

Hausrath tells us that Herod Antipas occupied another of the palaces built by Herod the Great, opposite the Temple. To this princely residence, therefore, Jesus was now led, still in His bonds, and accompanied by the cruel crowd of His Jewish accusers.

Herod was anxious to see Jesus, of whose miracles He had heard. His seems to have been merely a cheap curiosity. St. Luke says he "hoped to see him perform some miracle"—as if a miracle were a juggler's trick performed to

amuse the spectators. It throws light on the shallow mind of this contemptible ruler.

So when Jesus was brought before him Herod asked Him many questions, evidently childish questions, unworthy questions. And to these Jesus answered not one word. Then Herod the ruler, being accustomed to obedience and sycophancy, quickly became enraged at this Man who set him at nought by mere silence. Herod set his soldiers upon Jesus like so many dogs, and they, slaves to their master, mocked Him, and put a "gorgeous robe" upon Him.

But Herod, who had suffered from the superstitious fears which had attacked him after his murder of John the Baptist, had no intention of taking part again in the killing of a Prophet, and so, as he could make nothing of Jesus' silence, he sent Him back again to Pilate.

Jesus had now been subjected to five so-called "trials," and being brought again before Pilate He was made to suffer a sixth. But Pilate did not know what to do. As he sat on the judgment seat his wife, whose name was Claudia Procula, sent a messenger to him saying that she had had a dream that morning concerning Jesus, in which she had "suffered greatly," and solemnly warning her husband, "Do nothing with that innocent man." Such a warning, reaching Pilate when his own instinct had already cautioned him, must

have plunged him deeper in uncertainty. Cruel and weak though he was, he wished to spare the life of this strange Prisoner who stood silent and meek, yet majestic, before him.

So, as it was the custom at the Passover for the Roman governor to release, as a favor to the people, one Jewish prisoner who might then be under sentence of death, Pilate asked them if he should release Jesus. But there was a prisoner named Bar-Abbas, who had both robbed and murdered, and the people—incited to this by the High Priests and elders—clamored that he, not Jesus, should be set free.

Then Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus? And the fanatical mob, whose passions were blown hither and thither like a feather in the wind, who were easily swayed by the crafty priests and elders, and yet of whom some, perhaps, only five days before had cried "Hosanna" to this same Jesus—this mob cried out, "Have him crucified!"

Pilate said, "Why, what has he done wrong? But they shouted on more fiercely than ever, Have him crucified!"

Pilate saw that he could do nothing more. To oppose the people might be to incite them to revolt and bring down upon him the anger of his master, the Roman emperor Tiberius. So, thinking first of his own interest and safety, and

only secondly of his pity for Jesus and his sense of justice, he "took some water, and washed his hands in presence of the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this good man's blood. It is your affair!' To this all the people replied, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'" Thus spoke the mob, as mobs have spoken before and since, hysterical, bloodthirsty, without conscience. But no mob ever spoke such terrible words as these.

So Pilate released the prisoner Bar-Abbas, but Jesus he commanded to be scourged, perhaps still hoping that the people would be satisfied with this punishment—for it was a barbarous one, done with a weapon like the Russian knout, made of leathern thongs set, for nearly all their length, with pieces of bone and lead, whose edges were left jagged to cut and rend the flesh. Thirty-nine stripes were given. The victim was stripped of all his clothes before the people, his hands were tied to a pillar so that his body was bent forward and his back exposed to the merciless blows of the scourge. Usually those who were thus scourged lost consciousness after a while, or were thrown into convulsions, and sometimes they died either during the ordeal or just afterwards. To such an unspeakable punishment as this was Jesus, the loving, the merciful, the doer of good, subjected. And after the scourging was over—and He, whose body was sound and healthy,

neither fainted nor died, as people sometimes did—He was once more derided, as a preliminary of death, according to the uncivilized Roman custom, which allowed insult to be offered to executed men, even during their dying agonies.

Pilate's soldiers took Jesus, all bleeding as He was, into their guard room, and calling their fellows to join in this vile scene, they clad Him in a purple robe, put on His drooping head a crown made of thorns, and in His right hand—trembling no doubt from the shock of pain and torture—a reed for a scepter, and then bowed before Him, mocking Him with their “Hail, King of the Jews.” Not satisfied with ridicule, they proceeded to insult. They spat upon Him, and snatching the reed from His hand they struck His head with it in a mad fury of rage at His silent endurance.

Even then Pilate could not make up his mind to deliver Jesus up to be killed. Once more he brought Him forth to His Jewish accusers, and He stood there before them clad in the mocking purple robe of His derided kingship, His eyes quiet with an awe-inspiring serenity under the crown of thorns from which dripped its dew of blood.

Pilate said, “There is your king!” Would you kill Him, this submissive yet kingly victim, who hath done no wrong? But they only cried out,

these "Chief Priests and officers" and the rest, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Then do you take Him and crucify Him, Pilate said again, "for I find no fault in him." The Jews repeated that He should die because He had broken their law by calling Himself a Son of God.

At this Pilate, filled with a superstitious fear of Jesus' possible godhead, returned to the Judgment Hall with Jesus, and asked Him, "Where do you come from?" For Pilate could not rid himself of the feeling that he was dealing with a Man who was more than man. But Jesus did not answer. Why should He? He had told them again and again who He was. He knew it was fruitless to say more. He was to die.

Then Pilate was very angry. He said, Are you thus silent even to me, the governor? Do you not know that it is in my power to kill you or to release you?

Jesus replied, with a calm dignity that put this Roman ruler to shame, "You would have no power over me, unless it had been granted you from above. So you are less guilty than he who betrayed me to you." You were only a secondary instrument in these events.

These words must have had a strong effect upon Pilate. Never in his life of witnessing many dreadful human sufferings had he seen a man,

bleeding from a recent torture, worn from insult and cruelty, helpless, friendless, alone, yet stand before him like a king, towering above him, the powerful Pilate, by pure spiritual superiority, dominating him by some supreme Power before which his soul was compelled to kneel. He was therefore again "anxious to release him."

Then the Jews cried out, knowing how to work upon Pilate's fears of the Emperor Tiberius Cæsar, "If you release him you are no friend of Cæsar's! Anyone who makes himself a king is against Cæsar!"

Then Pilate sat down in the Judgment seat, still feebly holding out against them. But they cried out, "Off with him! Off with him! Crucify him!" Pilate said again, "Crucify your king?" And the High Priests gave him the final hypocritical answer, to which he, the servant of Cæsar, could make no further reply, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

Then Pilate delivered Jesus over to the Roman soldiers, and to the High Priests and elders, to be crucified. "So they took Jesus, and he went away, carrying the cross by himself."

The moral of Pilate's struggle between motives of good and evil, letting the evil prevail, may be this: He was indeed but an instrument in the greatest crime the world has ever com-

mitted; but if his past life had not been selfish and cruel and abominable, would he have been chosen as a fit instrument for the base service he had to perform? ¹

¹ Luke xxiii, 5-25; Matt. xxvii, 11-31; Mark xv, 1-20; John xix, 1-17.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CRUCIFIXION

Death by crucifixion was, even in that partly uncivilized age, one of the greatest cruelty and infamy, and it was not until the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine (306–337 A.D.) that, by the more humane sentiment of men, it was abolished. It was also a death by torture much worse than hanging or beheading, which only lasted a brief instant. To die on a cross meant that the cross was first laid upon the ground, the victim placed upon it, and heavy nails driven through each hand and foot. There was usually a wooden piece affixed beneath the feet to prevent the body being torn away by its own weight. The cross was then raised and planted firmly in the earth, and the sufferer was left to receive the taunts and insults—or even blows—of all who passed by for that purpose, and to die slowly through long hours of agony—of acute pain, of cramped misery, of festering wounds, of starvation, of cruel thirst—until death or unconsciousness mercifully relieved him. So terrible was this prolonged death that there was a custom sometimes,

but not always, practiced among the Romans of striking the victim in the upper part of the side in order to hasten death; and among the Jews certain ladies of wealth contributed money to provide wine mixed with a strong opiate, of which a draught was given to the crucified to assuage their suffering. The Rabbis justified this practice from the text in Proverbs xxxi, 6, in the words of the wise mother of King Lemuel, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish."

In the case of Jesus the merciful preliminary blow was not given; and when they offered Him the cup of wine and myrrh, He refused it.¹ He, the All-Merciful, showed no mercy to Himself in the hour of His final self-sacrifice.

A company of Roman soldiers, in full armor, commanded by their centurion, or captain, were ordered by Pilate to proceed to the crucifixion of Jesus. They took off from Him the purple robe, and clad Him again in His own humble and now blood-stained garments, and the procession started for the place of death, which lay outside the city gates, and was known as the place of a skull, or in the Hebrew Golgotha. The Greek word for "skull" is rendered in the "King James" version of the Bible as "Calvary."²

¹ Mark xv, 23.

² Luke xxiii, 33.

It is possible that the mortal body of Jesus, which had already suffered so terribly, now began to fail in strength, and that under the burden of the cross which they laid on His bleeding shoulders, He may have stumbled, or even fallen. For, as they proceeded they met a man named Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country into Jerusalem, and they compelled him to bear Jesus' cross, and walk behind Him. As they went, a large crowd of people gathered and followed the solemn procession, among them many women who began to weep and lament for Jesus. But He paused, and said to them, firmly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children!" And He foretold again the dreadful days that were to come to them and to their city.

In the procession were also two common thieves, who were to be crucified with Jesus. The cross of Jesus was therefore set up in the middle, and the crosses of the thieves at each side of Him. And when Jesus was nailed on the cross, they placed above His head the inscription which Pilate had caused to be written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek: "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

If Pilate intended this ironic title as a last taunt to the Jews whom he despised, the shaft went home, for the High Priests protested, say-

ing, "Do not write, THE KING OF THE JEWS; write, HE SAID I AM THE KING OF THE JEWS." But Pilate dismissed them with the curt reply, "What I have written, I have written."

The cross was then set in its place; and instead of uttering the mortal groans of a man in agony, Jesus broke His silence with these words of mercy, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. . . ."

As sometimes men had been taken down from the cross before death, and revived, four soldiers were left to guard the Crucified. According to the custom which gave to the executioners the clothes of the victims, these men took the garments of Jesus and divided them, "one for each soldier. But as the tunic was seamless, woven right down in a single piece," the soldiers, not wanting to tear the coat, drew lots for it, and thus unknowingly fulfilled the Scriptural prophecy which said, "They distributed my clothes among them, and drew lots for my raiment." After this the soldiers kept watch in obedience to their orders, passing the time according to their own habits.

Some of the onlookers had been awed into quietness by this tragic scene, but some cried, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Others, persisting in their stupid misunderstanding of His words, said, "You were to destroy the

temple, and build it in three days! Save yourself, if you are God's Son!" And the High Priests and Scribes and elders passed by Jesus, mocking Him, saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He, the 'King of Israel!' Let him come down now from the cross; then we will believe in him!" One of the crucified thieves also said, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well." But the other thief rebuked him, and reminded him that they indeed were thieves and justly punished for it, "but he has done no harm." And he said to the Lord, "Jesus, do not forget me when you come to reign." And Jesus, forgiving the penitent thief, said, "I tell you truly, you will be in paradise with me this very day."

But our Lord was not left wholly alone among His enemies. St. John tells us that Mary, His Mother, and Mary, who was the wife of a man named Cleopas, and that same Mary of Magdala, who with other faithful and adoring women, had followed Jesus from place to place ever since His forgiveness of her and her penitent turning away from sin, were standing near the cross. St. John also was there; and when Jesus beheld him, He said to His Mother, "Woman, there is your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Son, there is your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his home." Thus, in His last agony,

Jesus confided the care of His Mother to His best-loved disciple.

For six long hours He hung on the cross. At about the "sixth hour," which was the third after the Crucifixion, the sky was darkened, and this deep gloom lasted until the "ninth hour." At this "ninth hour," that is to say, at the end of the six hours of torture, Jesus uttered the last cry of His *human body*, His mortal suffering. "Jesus gave a loud cry, *Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthanei*" (that is, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?')" It was His body of a man, crying out from the depth of human anguish—not merely the torture of the cross, but the preceding trials, and mockery, and cruel derision and scorn, which, coming in many cases from the very people whom He had so blessed and healed and loved, must have tortured His great human and divine heart as the jagged nails now rent His body. This last cry of Jesus brings Him nearer to us in our humanity, and helps to fulfill His mission to us as a Man, One who understands our woes and our weaknesses as if He were one of us as well as One with God who made us. From this thought we can gather, if we will, the deepest consolation.

But, if Jesus cried with "a loud voice," He was not weakened unto death even by all which He had undergone for many hours past. The

voice of those who die exhausted cannot be loud. St. Matthew says that He even cried aloud twice. At his first cry one of those who stood near—perhaps one of the soldiers—said, “He is calling for Elijah.” Another offered Him a sponge dipped in vinegar, which he held up to Him on a rod. The others said, “Stop, let us see if Elijah does come to save him.” For they thought that “Eloi,” meaning “My God” in the tongue which Jesus spoke, was “Elijah.”

When Jesus uttered his second “loud cry,” He said, “Father, I trust my spirit to thy hands.” John tells us that He said, “It is finished.” And when He had spoken, He “bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.”

Then the sun was completely darkened by an eclipse, and the veil of the Temple, which screened the Holy of Holies, “was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, the rocks were split, the tombs were opened, and a number of bodies of the saints who slept the sleep of death rose up—they left the tombs after his resurrection and entered the holy city and appeared to a number of people.”³

Now when the captain and the other soldiers saw the earth quake and the cloven rocks and the darkness, they were afraid, and said, “This man was certainly a son of God.” The people

³ Matt. xxvii, 51-53.

also who had not already departed, and the group of women—Mary the Mother, and Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene, besides “a number of women”—saw and bore witness to the circumstances of Jesus’ death. “And when all the crowds who had collected for the sight saw what had happened, they turned away beating their breasts.”⁴

⁴ Matt. xxvii, 31-56; Mark xv, 21-41; Luke xxiii, 25-49; John xix, 16-30.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE RESURRECTION

As the following day would be Saturday, the Sabbath, and more holy than usual because of the Passover, and as sometimes crucified men remained alive for many hours, the Jews did not want the bodies of the dying to be left any longer on the crosses, so they went to Pilate and requested that the legs of the three victims should be broken—to insure their death—and that they should then be taken away for burial. As Farrar says, they who did not hesitate to murder their Messiah at the Passover, thought it wrong that this Passover should be polluted by His Holy Body hanging on the cross. But this was characteristic of their constant hypocrisy. So Pilate gave orders, and the soldiers, according to rule, broke the legs of the two thieves. Probably they shrank from touching Him whose dying cry had so impressed them. But being compelled to obedience, they approached Jesus, and found that He was already dead. They did not therefore strike Him—again unconsciously ful-

filling a Scriptural prophecy that "A bone of him shall not be broken." But one of the soldiers, less impressionable perhaps than the others, and knowing that they would be held responsible for the completion of the execution, thrust his long spear into the side of Jesus, and water and blood came from the wound. Thus no doubt could remain that Jesus was dead.

We have spoken before of Joseph of Arimathæa, a rich member of the Sanhedrin, who was inclined to believe in Jesus, though he dared not openly avow it, but who had not agreed with his fellow members of the Sanhedrin when they pronounced the sentence of death upon Him. This man now went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus that he might bury it. Perhaps he felt the regret and remorse that come to men when they feel that they have not done all they could for those they love while they yet lived. Pilate asked if Jesus were surely dead, and called the captain to inquire of him; and when he learned the truth, he gave his consent to Joseph. Then Nicodemus, the other rich man who had been favorably inclined to Jesus but lacked courage to profess his faith, came also with costly spices to place them on the body. Joseph brought some fine linen, and with the spices they bound the wounded body of our Lord in this long piece of linen, after the Jewish manner, and laid it

reverently in Joseph's tomb, which he had caused to be built for himself, and which stood in a garden belonging to him that was near the place of Calvary. And the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the others—though Mary the Mother seems to have been taken away by John from this terrible scene—stood near by and witnessed the burial of their Lord, and saw the great stone rolled before the door of the sepulcher. And then they departed, to prepare more spices for the embalming before the Sabbath came—and after this, to obey the commandment of Sabbath rest, for the Sabbath began at sunset of Friday. It was then their intention to return to the Holy Tomb after the Sabbath, early on Sunday morning.

Meanwhile, on the Sabbath, the High Priests and Pharisees came anxiously to Pilate, and said, "We remember, sir, that when this impostor was alive he said, 'I will rise after three days.' " Now they had no faith whatever in His resurrection, but they feared that His disciples would come in the night and carry away the body of Jesus and bury it elsewhere, so that they could say to the people that He was risen from the dead, and the people would then believe, and trouble would follow for those who had crucified Him.

We can almost hear the tone of contempt with

which Pilate replied, "Take a guard of soldiers, go and make it as secure as you can."

So the Jews hastened away to the Tomb, examining it carefully, no doubt, to make sure of their object, and sealed up the stone at the entrance to the sepulcher, leaving a guard of soldiers there to watch it through the starry silence of that long, wonderful night.

In the early morning, just before the dawn of Sunday, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary," and two other women, Salome and Joanna, came hurrying to the sepulcher of their Lord, bringing with them the sweet spices which they had prepared as the last poor offering of their service of love. They were wondering how they should be able to enter the sepulcher, or who would push away for them the great stone which closed it.

But they need not have been troubled, for there was, either just before they came or as they came, an earthquake, and "an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and went and rolled away the boulder and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow." ¹

So frightened were the sentries by this dread vision that they "shook and became like dead men." The women too were trembling with fear.

¹ Matt. xxviii, 1-6.

But the angel said, "Have no fear; I know you are looking for the crucified Jesus. He is not here, he has risen as he told you he would." And he commanded them to go quickly to the disciples and tell them also. Mary Magdalene, joyful and yet afraid, went straightway to bear these tidings to Peter and John, and they came running to the Tomb. John outran the older Peter, and arriving breathless he looked into the sepulcher and saw that it was empty except for the linen clothes in which Jesus had been wrapped, and which lay there, folded. John did not enter; but Peter entered and also saw the linen lying there, and the Tomb empty. Now John too went in, and "when he saw for himself he was convinced." Then both John and Peter, overcome by this revelation, went away to their home.

But Mary Magdalene remained there, and as she sat weeping and looking into the empty sepulcher, Jesus Himself appeared to her. St. John tells us that, for some reason which we cannot understand, Mary Magdalene did not know Him; but when He said to her, "Mary," she recognized Him. It would seem to us as if His body had been in some way veiled, but His spirit was immediately known to her when He spoke. And He said, "Cease clinging to me. I have not ascended yet to the Father, but go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and

yours, to my God and yours.' ”² We can imagine how wildly then her heart must have beat as she hurried away to obey His commandment and carry His message to the disciples.

Then Jesus also appeared to the other women, saying, “Hail!” And they fell down at His feet and worshiped Him. And He said, “Have no fear! Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee; they shall see me there.” So these women could bear testimony that Jesus was risen. But when they had told these things to the apostles, it “seemed in their opinion to be nonsense; they would not believe them.”

Meanwhile, the soldiers who had guarded the Tomb, knowing now that it was empty, and troubled by the vision and the events they had witnessed, went to the Jews and told them all. The Jews must have received their words with some anger, and with their usual incredulity. Their theory was that the soldiers had fallen asleep, and the body of Jesus had been stolen by His disciples. Where faith is entirely absent it is easy to find obvious reasons against almost any fact; but they must have known that a guard of Roman soldiers, ordered to keep a watch, would be very unlikely to risk disgrace, perhaps death, by falling asleep. And if, indeed, some of them slept, it is evidently absurd to suppose that all of them

² John xx.

had done so. But the Jews told the soldiers they must say that they had slept, and the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, and they gave them not only large sums of money as a bribe, but the further and necessary assurance that they would protect them from punishment by Pilate for failure in their duty in case it reached his ears. The soldiers, influenced by the heavy bribes, and afraid in any case of the Jews' power to report to Pilate, by any sort of explanation, the failure of their watch, confused also no doubt by the superstitious fright they had experienced from the earthquake and the vision at the Tomb, agreed to spread this false tale; and St. Matthew says, "And this story has been disseminated among the Jews down to the present day."

St. Luke and St. Paul (in Luke xxiv, 34, and I Corinthians xv, 5) both testify that Jesus appeared to St. Peter; but of the details of this appearance we know nothing.

In the evening of the same day on which He appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women, two of His disciples were walking on the road from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus "about seven miles" away, earnestly talking of the wonderful events of the day, of our Lord's death and His reported resurrection, when they were joined by a stranger, who walked with them, and asked them of what they were talking?

The disciple whose name was Cleopas asked him a question in return: Are you a stranger that you do not know the important things which have been happening here? And the Stranger said, What things? Then they told him of Jesus' death and burial, and of His appearance to the women, and that the apostles who went to the tomb saw indeed the empty sepulcher, as the women had described it, but saw not Jesus, and they were discouraged. Then the Stranger said, "O foolish men, with hearts so slow to believe after all the prophets have declared!" And He related to them the prophecies from the Scriptures concerning Jesus, and how all must be fulfilled.

When they reached Emmaus the Stranger became silent, and was about to leave them, but they urged Him to stay with them, for something in His words and spirit held and deeply affected them. So He stayed with them.

But when they were together at the evening meal, "He took the loaf, blessed it, broke it and handed it to them." Then suddenly they knew Him, that He was their risen Lord. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight." They were thrilled, then, with joy and emotion. "They said to one another, 'Did not our hearts glow within us when he was talking to us on the road, opening up the Scriptures for us?'" So they left Em-

maus immediately, and hurried back to Jerusalem to find and tell the apostles of their miraculous experience.

They found the eleven apostles sitting together in a room carefully locked for fear lest the Jews should come to persecute them. But they were in a joyful mood, and told the newcomers that "the Lord had really risen, and that he had appeared to Simon" (Peter). Then Cleopas, and the other disciple, excited and breathless as they must have been from their hasty journey and the nature of their tidings, told how they too had seen the Lord.

And even while they were speaking, another miracle occurred—Jesus himself "stood among them."

Now, mark what followed: they were terrified, and supposed they had seen a ghost.

One pronounced human weakness is an almost universal fear of the dead. Why we should feel this fear we do not know, for there is no reason whatever for it, and it places us in the same category with the timid horse who shies from a shadow on the road because he does not know what it is. It is simply that base and unspiritual quality which we call fear, and which is one of the greatest bars to our spiritual progress. Jesus, of course, knew this fear in the human hearts of even His best apostles, and may this not ex-

plain why He chose to appear to Mary Magdalene and to the disciples and apostles at various times with His personality veiled, as it were, from their eyes, that they might not suffer the shock of fear?

Yet even though He had revealed Himself risen to Mary and the women, and to Peter, they were not even then adjusted to this great idea; and so, when He now came among them they were "terrified."

Jesus asked them why they were frightened. "Why do doubts invade your mind?" That is, why do you doubt and question and fear Me? "Look at my hands and feet. It is I! Feel me and see; a ghost has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." And He showed them His pierced hands and feet. It was too wonderful, too joyful, they were afraid to believe such happiness as this. So He asked them if they had any food. He would eat before them, and reassure them completely. When He had eaten a piece of fish, He reminded them that these things which had happened were only the fulfillment of what He had told them when He was yet with them. "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures"—that they might see how all had been fulfilled. And He said, "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me forth, I am sending you forth." And as he said this, "he breathed

on them, and added, 'Receive the Holy Spirit! If you remit the sins of any, they are remitted: if you retain them, they are retained.'"

The only apostle who was absent at this time was Thomas. Thomas was loving but, as already said, inclined to doubt and melancholy, and so when the other apostles told him they had seen Jesus risen, he could not believe, much as he longed to do so. But eight days later they were all gathered together again, Thomas also being there, and though the door was shut Jesus suddenly stood among them, and said "Peace be with you!" Then He spoke to Thomas: "Look at my hands, put your finger here; and put your hand here into my side; cease your unbelief and believe."

Thomas obeyed Him and, believing, because his bodily senses convinced him, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus said, "You believe because you have seen me? Blessed be those who believe though they have never seen me." ³

³ John xix; John xx; Mark xv; Luke xxiii; Luke xxiv; Matt. xxvii; Matt. xxviii.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ASCENSION

The apostles now returned happy and hopeful to Galilee, as Jesus had commanded them to do, knowing that according to His promise they would see Him there, but they did not know when or how. So they waited in patience, and to earn their livelihood some of them returned to their occupation of fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, from which Jesus had called them to follow Him. But how much must they have changed since then! These simple and ignorant men had lived three and a half years in the company of Jesus, taught constantly by His word and deed, and now they had the assurance—the most wonderful of all—that He had risen from the dead. There were Simon Peter, Thomas, Bartholomew, John and James, and two others. All of them went fishing, but catching nothing the whole night through they had no food.

As morning dawned, a Man stood on the shore looking at them, and presently He asked them, "Lads, have you got anything?" They said, "No." "Throw your net on the right of the

boat, and you will have a take." Then they began to wonder about the Stranger, who spoke in this way to them. But they cast the net, and it became so full of fish that they could not draw it up. Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as the loving and impetuous Peter heard this, he put on his fisherman's coat—for he had taken off his clothes to work better—and "jumped into the water, while the rest of the disciples came ashore in the punt (they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards), dragging their netful of fish."

When they reached the shore they found a "fire of coals," and fish cooking, and bread. And Jesus told them to bring some of the fish. And there were a hundred and fifty-three large fish. Jesus then bade them eat. All this time none of them dared ask who He was, for they knew it was their Lord. Thus again had He come to them in all gentleness and mercy. "This was the third time," according to St. John.

After they had satisfied their hunger, Jesus spoke gravely to Peter, "Simon, son of John," He said, "do you love me more than the others do?" Peter answered, "Why, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my lambs." And the second and the third time He repeated the question, and Peter answered yes, and was grieved that the Lord seemed to doubt his love,

and Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep." In this way Jesus gave His solemn command to Peter—and through him to His Church—to shelter and protect, and to spread the Gospel.

We do not know how He parted with them on this occasion, nor whether it was now that He commanded them to assemble on a mountain in Galilee. But we know that they came together there, and perhaps with them those "five hundred brothers" of whom St. Paul testifies twenty years later in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, xv, 6, where he says, "The majority of whom survive to this day, though some have died." And St. Matthew says of this meeting on the mountain, with that usual candor of the Gospels which is one of the strongest proofs of their truth, "When they saw him they worshiped him, though some were in doubt."

"Though some were in doubt," and some may always doubt, but Faith remains. For Faith is one of the big things, like Life and Death and Love. In some it can be modified, in others disturbed, but it cannot be entirely destroyed, and "blessed are those who believe though they see not."

It was here that Jesus told them again to go forth and teach "all nations," and concluded with that enriching and comforting promise, "And I

will be with you all the time, to the very end of the world."

St. Paul also testifies to an appearance of Jesus to the apostle James, brother of John, but this is not mentioned by the Gospels.

And now the last earthly appearance of our Lord must be recorded, about forty days after His crucifixion. The apostles had returned to Jerusalem, in obedience to Jesus' command, and Jesus came to them there, though under what precise circumstances we are not told. But from Jerusalem He "led them out as far as Bethany," that peaceful little village which He loved. And somewhere in that quiet countryside He paused, and "lifting his hands, he blessed them. And as he blessed them, he parted from them." So He passed out of their sight.

Then they fell down and worshiped Him, and went back joyfully to Jerusalem, ready for any fate which might befall them in His service, knowing that all He had told them had been fulfilled, and that they were endowed with the Love of God, with Truth, and with Life forevermore.

So ended this wonderful period of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, His life of only about thirty-three years. How humble had been that life, how—in the worldly sense—poor! He had lived on barley loaves and fish, or whatever was

offered Him by the hospitality of the villages and towns where He ministered to the people, healing and teaching them. He had had no home; never had He possessed any portion of the earth which He could call His own. Often weary and half nourished, He had maintained His cause against the slyest, subtlest, most insidious enemies, and never had He yielded to them an inch of ground. Mild indeed He was, but militant He never failed to be when Truth and Justice were at stake. His life was only for His mission—and at the last that life was sold for a pitiful sum of money. Yet He was the source of the Christian religion, the Savior, even in a practical sense, of the world. The beauty of intelligent and loving humility, of justice from man to man, of courageous and honest defense of what is right, of service inspired by love: those are some of the truths for which He died. And He died for us, that we might live, here and hereafter.

THE END





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